DOSSIER ON TOURISM

Issues In Tamil Nadu



Equations

MAY 1997

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Introduction

The idea of putting together an information pack on issues related to tourism development in Tamil Nadu first emerged in 1994
those involved in understanding the changing
series of meetings with the above mentioned cross-section of people in Tamil Nadu which resulted in the production of an EQUATIONS paper Tourism Development and Environmental Issues: Close Look at Tamil Nadu by Latheef Kizhisseri. This paper was presented at Tamil Nadu Environment Council's Workshop on Tamil Nadu: Environmental Issues August 1994.

It was in early 1995, that Hari Babu (the researcher and author of this document) embarked on a long and grueling visit of Tamil Nadu for first hand interviews and visits to various tourism sites we had identified. The idea of the Dossier on Tourism: Issues
discussions with all those who were interviewed.

One of the dilemmas of putting this Dossier together for EQUATIONS was to decide whether it should confine itself to reporting the developments that we thought were significant, or to include also our view points along with such reportage. The advantage with the former method was that the information has to be only presented in an "as is" basis (based on a certain belief) that there would probably be a wider audience. But, the alternative of presenting our view point from the vantage position of understanding the implications of policy options taken by the Government appealed to us. We realised that the pace at which the developments were taking place, it was imperative that as an organisation we could not take a dispassionate view of the happenings that we are reporting.

The Dossier is, in the words of Hari Babu , an attempt to an overall look into Tamil Nadu and its tourism activities. The general attitude taken, as is evident, is not to determine the 'micro - macro' in tourism. Nor is it to get hooked onto the debate of its various 'forms'. No emphasis is laid to issues or regions which could be termed as specific case-studies. The thrust is to identify and reveal tourism policies and related issues.

This Dossier is divided into 8 main chapters. Each of these chapters has an essay from EQUATIONS which locates the specific issues
documentation for the positions that we have taken on the issue. We have included material that are

not purely related to tourism and this is to show the inter-linkages of the
the larger development priorities of

In the Annexures, we have included the judgment of
which has been a pivotal issue in Tamil Nadu.
are not hard to seek, since both are land-intensive, mono-cultural and introduced as part of the new economic dictum, 'earn foreign-exchange at any cost'. We have also included the Detailed Demand for Grant 1997-98 made by the Minister for Tourism, in the last Budget 1997-98. We acknowledge the efforts of the Budget Analysis
understanding of the working of the Government.

Whilst the EQUATIONS Docum
and identification of the issues to be taken-up, this was followed, as mentioned earlier with visits, discussions, debates and participation in various seminars and conferences. The EQUATIONS team that was involved with Hari Babu were Shirley Susan & Dhanaraj Keezhara.

We also relied quite a lot on the critique and comments of
Kizhisseri, Ossie Fernandes and M.Rajendran. It was during several meetings with all of the above that the final shape of the present
that we felt were all relevant. Sections of this Dossier have been presented at an Indo-Australian Symposium on Tourism, Culture and Hospitality organised by the University of Madras - December'95, Workshop on
the University of Madras - November'96, the Workshop on Coastal Issues organised by the Coastal Action Network - February'97.

This Dossier hopes to bridge the information gap and initiate a broader, intense discussion on tourism issues in Tamil Nadu.
to those to whom the debate will be of ec greater relevance. While acknowledging the perseverance of Hari Babu over two years in bringing this Dossier to you, true acknowledgement for this work would be your comments, suggestions and critique.

May 1997

K T Suresh
Coordinator

1
A Backdrop of Tourism Debate

An urge to travel has always been human. It has transcended race, sex and region and has been a motive force behind both learning and colonising.

The earliest stages of human travel were characterised by needs of survival. Later humans travelled in search of precious metals, raw materials, exotic items, knowledge and enlightenment. With travels in search of spiritual perfection and contentment, pilgrimage became a mass activity along with the advent of organised religions.

Industrial revolution paved the way for separating work from play. The labour class was encouraged to see leisure as essential for their survival, as a means to recharge their energies and maintain health. Leisure and play were identified as essential to maintain the productivity of labour by the moneyed class who benefited by such productivity. This convergence of interests of the wage-givers and wage-receivers necessitated legitimising of leisure as an inherent right of workers.

The capitalist class (the wage-givers) later found that the very leisure of the mass of labour can be used for increasing profit by managing it like any other industrial activity. The result of it was that mass commercial tourism was now poised to become the largest industry in the world by the beginning of the next millennium.

The debates concerning tourism are currently limited to a corner in the media and in other public domain. Today tourism is projected as the new 'saviour' to solve developmental backwardness of many Asian, African and Latin American countries. These projections are coming from the same quarters that projected import-dependent export-oriented models of development earlier, for the poor.

But looking further back into the history it could be traced that the accumulated surplus earned by way of economic and political hegemony is also one of the 'motivational factor' that makes tourism viable, though many of the 'studies' shun away from this reality. Centuries of 'Human Trade', (the meanest of trade) of millions of African nationals is something the 'new saviours' do not want us to remember. These were people with flourishing peaceful civilisations while the whites were fighting with wooden clubs. What is left of Africa today is the effect of the decimation of the young and most able Africans.

Not only slave trade but the wage saved by forceful and inhuman labour was the foundation for colonies. Once colonised, loot of raw materials and wealth flowed, which in turn gave leverage to the industrial revolution.

If only a percentage of the total plundered wealth is returned to the erstwhile colonies - African, Asian and Latin American people would not be strangling in the debt trap today.* It is this wealth that acts as a catalyst to the motivation to travel.

The colonial rooted local masters do not want history to be remembered. The post-independence period witnessed these renegades betraying the very cause for which the martyrs laid their lives for. People-oriented and self-reliant economy was the dream of the people. Instead the entire wealth and resources were left open for daylight plunder to national and international agents.

A fundamental problem with the new model is that it is in no way different from earlier models in its negative impact on people and nature. But such negatives are conveniently hidden under rhetoric like 'tourism is a no-pollution industry', 'tourism is a service industry generating more employment' etc..

It is better to understand these new models because they are proposed by the same experts who provided misery to people in the name of progress through the earlier models.

Tourism- New Definitions

Studies could be traced encompassing the various and vivid aspects relating to tourism, its multinational factors and policy formulations as tourism related activities turned more intensified and sophisticated.

The psychological stress and uncertainty, disintegration of the family and community living, are factors of yesteryears. The post-industrial period witnessed vertical growth in tourism. This in turn intensified research studies too. The exponential growth of tourism volumes, led to critical and in-depth analysis of motivational factors. These studies are mainly Euro-centered since these countries are the 'sending countries'.

The major motivational factors that contribute to the growth of tourism have been defined.† "Post-industrial societies are characterised by a dominant service sector (the tertiary sector, but also the advanced tertiary, quaternary and quinary sectors) and by the production of knowledge (Touraine, 1969). Technology, information, the speed of change, and a projection towards the future are all commonly accepted as features of post-industrial societies.

* In 1838, Montgomery Martin , calculated adding 12% compund interest to the money taken by Briton , from the State of Bengal alone in 30 years as 72,39.79,917 pounds.The money that flowed from India to British banks during the 57 years between the battle of Plassey and Waterloo was 100,00,00.000 pounds. ("Patebhedam " Malayalam fortnightly No.103, p.20. Originally quoted from Mahatma Gandhi- The Early Phase Vol.I. Pyarelal).At the same time Britons' annual capital investment abroad - in all the colonies together-averaged only 29 million punds. (Earnest Mandel, Late Capitalism,p.50).
(Please note that the exchange rate of One pound is approximately 50 rupees , today).

† The following elaborate quoting of motivational factors of tourism in post - industrial society is only to highlight the inter - relationship between tourism and socio-politics and economics and not for a critical analysis of the same in this document.



As defined by Khan and Weiner (1967), Bell (1973) and Touraine (1969, 1977) several characteristics of post-industrial societies - but only those that differ from mass-consumer societies and are particularly relevant to tourism - may be defined.

1. There is a continual increase in the amount of free time, but also the inclusion of free time in the main economic sector. Although, social time has been recognised (Rezsohazy, 1986; Zoll, 1988), there is more freedom of choice, different attitudes to work and free time, including tourism. (Quantitative factors of budget time and qualitative factors of evaluation).

2. Decentralisation of production, and gradual growth of tertiary and quaternary sectors are present. This includes the emptying of inner-city areas and their growth of significance for group rituals in free time and for culture tourism.

3. Mobility has become the key word to the working of the system (Touraine, 1969) and the presence of conditions that make spatial mobility more intensive, frenetic and non-stop (Knebel, 1960).

4. Characteristics of post-industrial societies include ideological threats and awareness, the re-discovery of nature and the increasing interest given to places of forms of tourism outside the traditional tourist circuit.

5. Growing stress is placed on the quality of new forms of social needs, such as friendship and community life (Heller, 1975, 1978).

6. The final characteristic is the distribution of information through telematic and television links in today's global village (Mcluhan, 1965) including decentralisation prospects". [1]

While each of these categories may carry specific emphasis on nation, area and people, in general it points to the factors relating to the mounting trends in tourism.

The increasing tourist pressure on both the 'host' and the 'guest' nations also have been identified considering the rapid socio-political changes every nation is undergoing. New tourism policies are formulated accordingly taking into account contemporary changes in every nation leaving no space to bypass. Hence the policy formulations engulf the disintegration of Soviet Union to the Gulf crisis.[2] The parameters are so chosen that none of the individual nations' socio-economic situations go unchecked through the policy web. The forced economic globalisation accelerates and justifies these policies on economically weaker nations without the consent of the people.

The Indian Union does not have much of its population to fit into the above motivational parameters. But a potential class is in embryo especially after the economic liberalisation.

But more than the tourists, it is the tourism related economic activity this neo-rich class is aiming at.

Tourism in the present Era

''The tendency for those who are *not* poor to become sightseers in the world of those who *are*, is one of the central problems of international development".[3] The sightseers of today are the central pillars on which governments are building their hope for further progress of the people in the new millennium. The traps of such a dependency are hidden in the colourful brochures used for promoting tourism on massive scale. The economics of this 'sightseeing industry' are equally anti-people like any other panacea offered to them in the past. The politics of tourism hinges upon creating dependent communities in destinations and thus facilitate easy manipulation and destruction of such communities.

In the New Economic Policy and liberalisation foreign exchange has became the catch word. Economic theories had started flowing from WTO (World Tourism Organisation, the Madrid based outfit of the UN) and similar bodies, emphasising the need for tourism promotion in Asia, Africa and Latin America as a means to achieve development.
It is predicted that by the year 2000 tourism would certainly be the single largest economic activity, pushing arms manufacturing into second place in global industrial activity.

"The WTO sees the role of policy as the means by which government motivations can be balanced with private sector motivations. This is primarily because it views tourism as one of the few developmental options for the third world countries, and a means of participation in the international trade in services, which form 70% of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in the industrialised countries and about 50% in many developing countries." [4] This WTO bait was swallowed by the Government of India in its National Action Plan for Tourism (NAPT) 1992, which acted as the new policy direction for almost all the State governments, especially those of South India.

The origin of the tourism economic myth making is the National Action Plan on Tourism (NAPT) 1992 by the Government of India which states: " Tourism has today, emerged as the fastest growing industry in the world. In 1990, the number of world travellers was 420 million who spent over US $ 249 billion. Direct employment in the industry was 112 million persons and indirect much more. While accurate statistics are not available, the figure of domestic tourists in the country was estimated as 62.3 million during 1990. Tourists arrivals in the country during the same period were 1.71 million, earning for the country Rs. 2440 crore (US $ 80 crore) in foreign exchange. During 1991-92 foreign exchange earnings were provisionally estimated at Rs. 3300 crore. The tourism industry in India generated in 1989-90 direct employment of 5.5 million persons and another 8 million who were employed indirectly. Given these dimensions of international tourism and the potential which exists in the country, there is tremendous scope for accelerated growth of tourism industry in the country".[5]



But what tourism planners do not want to reveal in these figures, especially the foreign exchange earnings is what is known as the foreign exchange leakage. Virtually the whole of infrastructure requirements of tourism is controlled by the rich tourist sending countries. It is the multi-national hotel chains, international airlines, tour operators and agencies who take away the largest chunk of the foreign exchange earnings. Whatever is left is again shared by the local affluent who are in collaboration with these multi-nationals.

The people who talk about foreign exchange earnings will agree that a couple hotels or a few airlines will not bring tourists or foreign exchange.* Tourism requires roads, air terminals, water, electricity etc. The enormous money required to build these infrastructure requirements of tourism goes from public funds. Natural resources like water and electricity which essentially belong to the people goes to the lavish misuse of this industry while negatively affecting the lives and economic activity of the people.

The NAPT further adds: "Tourism conferred considerable socio-economic benefits to the community thereby 'uplifting the quality of life'. It can further foster development even in areas where other economic activities would be difficult to sustain.... The state has made substantial contribution in the 'service sector' which is best 'left to private initiative and investment'. The policy now would be to 'encourage private investment both domestic and foreign for accelerated growth'...."[6]

The NAPT 1992 is in tune with the diktats of the two WTOs - the World tourism Organisation, the World Trade Organisation (the post -GATT global agency) - and other global agencies such as the World Bank, IMF and the UNDP. In the scheme put forward after 1992, Tamil Nadu is a 'prioritised state' for tourism development.

There is no proof to establish that tourism provides 'considerable socio-economic benefits' to the local community. In fact there is enough proof to establish that tourism destabilised local communities which were self-reliant. The trickle down and multiplier effect of tourism so often bandied around by tourism planners were proved as mere statistical ploys to fool local people.

The NAPT is in fact intended to 'uplift the quality of life' of the rich who can indulge in the luxury of enjoying holidays. This is further reinforced by repeated statements by tourism ministers and officials that they are concerned only with high spenders and do not want backpackers in tourism destinations.

Economic ordering of the global village within a frame of 'giver-receiver, guest-host, master-servant, rich-poor' is the hall mark of the present developmental strategies. This

* In reply to a question in the parliament, the then minister for civil aviation and tourism Mr.Ghulam Nabi Azad stated that in pursuance of the National Action Plan for Tourism (NAPT), an integrated plan to attract 5 million tourists by 1996-97 will require an investment of Rs.39,000 crores !

applies to tourism also. Tourism enforces a new form of dependency on the poor of the globe by ordering them to become providers of pleasure space to the rich of the world. Liberalisation, globalisation, and privatisation are the new slogans flashed on every vantage point to legitimise this new hi-tech invasion of the living space of the poor people all over world.

The naked destructive colonial plunder has given way to a more subtle and systematic kind. The colonial period protected the feudal forces and obstructed industrial growth of colonies. But in the neo-colonial era this strategy is discarded since the economic backwardness of people is against the economic interest of neo-colonialists. By programmed and monitored development of these regions, the purchasing power of the people is enhanced, so that they could be the market for consumer products.

The astronomical arithmetic gimmicking of NAPT and state tourism policies are necessary to betray the people. It justifies the claims for mammoth funds in the name of tourism industry and the flow of various aids and loans, in the overall plan to 'develop and loot'. Other nations and time had proved that these economic aids would contribute nothing to the receiving nation's economy. Only debt trap awaits the people and nation, while the greedy politicians' foreign bank account swells.

Commodifying nature for pleasure

What started as travel from time immemorial has taken up the status of an undisputed and ever growing multi-billion industry today. The emphasis given in tourism policies increasingly vouches this. The post-industrial motivational factors in promotion of tourism interestingly coincide with the post-industrial economic activities also. The shift from extraction and manufacture to services oriented economic activities, which gave considerable 'leisure and freedom' is considered as the major 'motivational factor' favouring tourism. Neo-colonial economic mode did not wait long to commercialise and capitalise this motive. "All that is left (in the period of late capitalism) is the dream of escape through sex and drugs, which in their turn are promptly industrialised." [7]

The increasing emphasis given to tertiary - service sector - is also not an act of choice. The unconsented relentless plunder of nature and resources, the unacceptable destruction of social life and environment, was the end product left behind by modernism and big industry. Water, virgin forests, precious metals, nothing was spared in the pursuit of profit.

Lot of hue and cry is heard about 'natives' and tribals destroying forest for fuel and fodder, depleting meadows by grazing. 'Learned' writers identify the aggressors of forest resources in the following interesting order - tribals, villagers, the population explosion (myth!) and only way down in the line -industry. This prioritisation itself is hypocritical. If today, these people are conniving in the destruction of their livelihood, it is the planners and experts who are to be blamed. Nobody asked for their consent when forests were



leased out to colonial plantations, industries and mammoth dams. Pushed and cornered from their livelihood regions, optionless they withdrew deeper into the forests. Deprivation and poverty, meaningless laws, terrorisation by authorities, they are in a 'cultural paralysis' today. Neither can they protect their own culture nor could they imbibe the imposed destructive culture.

Nor was any heed given to the mute cries and pleadings, occasional violent revolts of the rightful inheritors of these resources. Instead they were forcefully herded into dehumanised industrial slums. This plunder went on until the cruel realisation that the saturation point had been reached. The sudden shift to 'protect nature' was unavoidable and optionless and not merely science fiction.

Insult to Historical Knowledge, Life Experience

Mystification is a neo-marketing technique. Development programmes with hitherto unknown vocabularies alienate the 'native' people from their live worlds. People become 'objects' to be 'studied' not equal partners to share knowledge. 'Experts' and consultants' emerge with programmes and projects ready-made and universal, applicable to any corner of the earth and people. Little heed is given to relate specificity to people; their culture, values and habits imbibed historically. Biosphere concepts become universal, its regulation - applicable to every region, whether the un-manned Arctic or the thickly populated Tropics.

'Rediscovery of Nature' as a motivation seems genuine and innocent. Industrial onslaught has left the planet almost barren. A look into the major Biomes of the world reveals volumes. More than 90% of the planet's remaining tropical humid forests, tropical dry and deciduous forests (including monsoon forests) or woodlands are spread in Latin American, African and Asiatic regions. The region also covers the other 12 biomes.[8]

Policy makers are unwilling to 'consult' the vibrancy the people keep alive, through their harmonious and reciprocal relationship to the providers of their livelihood, nature. Earth is not boulders, rock and sand to these people. Trees are not mere forest and log. When they dig a hole, cut a tree they ask their humble forgiveness to the gods and goddesses who preserve them. Every myth and ritual is related to their surroundings and food gathering system. It is only through these life saviours, they are aware, their future generations could continue.

This knowledge cannot be 'learned' from books or micro-macro jargons, since this could not be experienced by none of the planners and consultants. Nor are the planners willing to be part of their plan.

The second phase of the onslaught on the residual nature in the pretext of preservation is on, as 'nature tourism' with theoretical justifications. The WTO duo (World Trade

Organisation and World Tourism Organisation) diktat the impotent local leaders to act for the entire people without their consent.

Now in the contemporary era of neo-colonialism, anti-people tourism policies get sanction unchallenged by these same lobbies' blessings. Being pawns with no self respect they accomplish all the 'dirty works' for tourism promotion paving way for various 'expertise' in technology to 'fly in' in the form of aid and loans, making sure of their sin-loaded commission. Their latest bid is our remaining forest and nature.

When ecology occupies the centre stage to tourism related activities there is a complete indifference to the life experience and knowledge of the people who lived and protected these regions for centuries together.

The dissenting voices querying the rhetorical justifications are always ignored or termed as biased. Authentic studies from the 'victims' hardly get into the mainstream academic circles, reason being obvious that they jeopardise tourism intentions of the states concerned.

Nature occupying the centre stage of tourism is not innocent. No tourism activities are limited to earmarked areas. Infrastructure requirements pressurise the periphery. Carrying capacity* is never maintained. Economic activities dominated by the affluent-class destabilises the existing community relationships and consumerism results, with grave cultural consequences.

Reading together the nature motivational factors plus the emphasis given to economic activities in tourism policies, provides a glaring picture of where the impotent politicians are leading us (people)to.

Land: For Survival or Pleasure

Land is not a growing resource. Therefore, the only possibility is conversion of land from one use to another. The increasing emphasis given to hotels, resorts and holiday homes in every coast, hill, dale and river side threatens the very existence of the local people. The hike in land prices is beyond the reach of even the middle class, forcing them further and further away from their traditional habitations and working spaces.

Tourism industry, government and private sector, national and multinational companies, top military and civil bureaucrats are in the forefront of massive land grabbing. The local people have become mute victims of the ever increasing land greed of this dominant coalition supported by powerful political lobbies. Often the local authorities are helpless witness to the land grabbing.

* Carrying capacity is the adverse impact a particular place at a particular time can tolerate, which includes: environmental, physical and perceptual or social carrying capacity.



Land is the prime element in tourism development. Tourism sees land as a mere space for pleasure and destroys the last grains of organic relationship of land and life. Land, the location and the mainstay of live world of communities is being looked upon by tourism industry as a site for lazily lounging. The whole rhythm and life processes in the localities gets disturbed due to conversion of land as a commodity for tourism promotion.

The right of local people over land in the area which is definitely established through land reforms laws is circumvented to convert it for tourism. The feudal land owner gets integrated into the market chain and the tenants and tillers, often Dalits, are ousted from land in the name of tourism promotion. The incapability of political parties - ruling and opposition - to earnestly incorporate slogans like 'land to the tiller' and pro-people land reform legislation in their political agenda signifies the undemocratic and feudal psychosis.

Change in economic interest of this class hinders land development for effective preservation and upgradation of production possibilities, since they are no more in agricultural production. The justification given is the myth that agriculture do not generate profits. All agricultural policies become defunct due to this attitude.

Infrastructure requirements of tourism industry leads to fragmentation and sub-division of agricultural land, making agriculture impossible to even those who want to retain it as occupation for a decent living with dignity and social status. The concrete constructions right in the middle of agricultural land degrade it and make it unproductive. The demand for more and more land for further development creeps into the surroundings of tourism centres. Unable to resist the economic and cultural pressures caused by tourism industry the local people ultimately abandon their life processions and turn rootless.

While the land owning class gets co-opted in tourism industry and their land for tourism development, the historical legitimacy the tiller of the land occupies, is invalid and leaves whole generations pauperised and into forced slavery.

The direct fallout of these policies are immediate marginalisation of subsistence farmers, the entire economically and socially weaker communities of the tourism localities. Food dependency and inflationary pressures force them to become cheap wage labourers in tourism industry or in the urban areas.

Food Dependency the Ulterior Motive

Tourism is one more weapon in the hands of globalisers to enforce global dependency on weak-willed nations. Terminology like 'under developed', 'economically weaker' and strategies to measure every nation in dollar terms irrespective of nation, need and culture specificity is part of this conspiracy.

The transfer of agricultural land for cash crops and farm products with emphasis to cater the export and urban market leads to food shortage, especially when traditional agricultural land and irrigation facilities are diverted from staple food production. The industrial plantations and the undue promotion and subsidies it enjoys in the proposed forest bill 1994 is also another threat.* Hardworking farmers are lured to abandon agriculture, instead the fertile land is being converted to cater to raw material requirements of industrial houses.

The equilibrium of Indian agriculture was already ruined with the introduction of 'green revolution'. Traditional cultivation and crop patterns were destabilised and seed varieties capable of withstanding pests and climatic fluctuations destroyed.

The Junkfood Culture

Tourism and urbanisation has brought severe change in the food habits thus negatively putting pressure on the overall transformation in food production to suit urban requirement. The gravest threat of this change is the disappearance of common species of vegetables and food grains.[5] Traditional vegetables which used to be both the bread winner as well as the nutrient to the rural population is found to be non-profitable since the 'hospitality industry' and urban requirements prefer non-traditional and 'English vegetables'. The risk involved in growing and high cost of production of vegetables makes them unaffordable even to the cultivator. The intake shortage is supplemented by costly but poor nutrient generating foods. The Seventh Plan Document "Dietary survey by the National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau reveals that nearly 50% of households surveyed in different states of the country consume foods which is quite inadequate to satisfy their requirement of either calories or proteins, or even both".[9]

As agriculture and food production pattern changes, the junk food companies known as Fast Food outlets are digging inroads even into the villages and rural areas. Multi-national companies like McDonnell's, Pizza Hut, KFC etc., specialising in these kind of food have already entered the Indian market. Besides negatively affecting our food habits, these food also pose severe health, hormone and sexual deformities.

Commodification of Culture

Cultural symbols and artefacts have become major raw materials in the tourism industry. Natural evolution of cultures becomes impossible in an environment where culture itself becomes a commodity to be traded in the market place. The experience of major tourist

* The bill creates a category known as Registered Tree Growers. Once agriculturists are registered as such, 'any land which is used by the owner for the purpose of plantation of tree species or for raising grass and other fodder shall be deemed to be plantation forest and shall not be included in his agricultural land holding for the purpose of ceiling laws'(Sec.38D). These farmers may receive subsidies and other assistance from the state'..... Critique of The Forest Bill 1994. p.9,10



destinations show that there is a systematic deculturisation taking place due to commercial tourism. Festivals and rituals which are testimonies of every land and people are now being stage managed in the name of tourism promotion by Central, state governments and tourism departments.

The value base of local communities collapses due to demonstration effect of increased number of tourists from alien cultures wandering in the localities.* The social disorientation and the diaspora it creates is unimaginable, specially among the youth who become easy prey to alien influences. The productive force of youth gets diverted to less productive or non-productive activities associated with tourism which may bring in a few pennies temporarily.

The mounting unemployment lures the youth to criminal activities like drug pushing in the hope of making fast buck. But once caught, their life is doomed. Being members of poor families, the imposed fines being very high and the term of imprisonment often running to decades, they along with their families are left to despair. Also in the act of drug pushing these youths themselves become drug addicts.

The debates to continue

- Tourism is a planned and imposed economic activity
- Tourism policies and tourist locations are determined without the consent of the people
- Tourism imposes change in land-use pattern resulting in pauperisation of communities and to food dependency
- Tourism leads to ecological degradation
- Tourism leads to deculturisation of communities

The way tourism is thrust on nations and people have to be understood and debated more deeply. This industry spreads its tentacles to every policy our nation draws, every economic institution, every economic activity and all walks of the life of people. We have generally kept tourism debates out of our main agenda. It is high time we bring into focus of our debates and draw strategies against this rootless economic activity before it is too late.

* Families living on the periphery of the full blown tourism centre Kovalam in Keralam are in despair. They could not marry off their daughters because of the notoriety this tourism centre has for prostitution of both sexes and children.

End Note

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3 Graham Hancock, Lords of Poverty. p.119.
4 Nina Rao, Tourism Policy:Need for Reorientation.EQUATIONS ANLetter Vol.3 p.4.
5 Extract from National Action Plan on Tourism 1992, Tourism Policy of India-An Exploratory Study. EQUATIONS. p.40.
6 Ibid. p.40,42.
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8 Action Plan for Biosphere Reserves- Nature & Resources - UNESCO.
9 Bharat Dogra. Structural Adjustment: Who Bears the Burden. p.19.

Ill-planned Development Strategies keep the Poor Hungry

ONE of the most disturbing trends of the nutrition scene in India in recent years has been the steady decline in the availability of proteins to poor people. Most of the traditional sources of proteins which are of special relevance to the poor have been adversely affected by development strategies which have ignored the nutrition needs of those living below the poverty line.

For centuries the poor people in most parts of India have met their protein needs predominantly from pulses. However, despite increasing resort to imports of pulses, the per capita net availability of pulses has been declining steadily.

The three-yearly average of per capital net availability of pulses per day (in grams) has declined from about 61 grams per day during 1951-53 to 37 grams during 1991-93. It is shocking that the biggest decline occurred soon after the introduction of the Green Revolution in India - during the decade 1961-63 to 1971-73, the availability of pulses declined drastically from 63.6 grams to 46.4 grams.

This happened to a significant extent because traditional practices of inter-cropping pulses (or other legumes) with cereals was given up in the quest for new, green revolution varieties of cereals which were considered unsuitable for inter-cropping.

Incidentally, the earlier practice of inter-cropping was also very healthy for maintaining the fertility of land. One expert has commented that as this led to the disruption of the traditional cereal-legume diet which ensured adequate and balanced proteins to poor people, this measure should be called the 'divorce of agriculture from nutrition.'

The data cited above is only the national average data. Keeping in view the steep increase in the prices of most pulses, we can safely say that the decrease in the case of the poorest households has been much higher.

In coastal areas, fish has been the staple protein for poor people for a long time. However, in recent years, this has been adversely affected by fisheries policies which have emphasised mechanised, export-oriented fishing while neglecting traditional fisherfolk.

A research paper by John Kurien and T R Thankappan Achari has estimated that in Kerala, the per capita availability of locally consumed fish decreased from around 19 kgs in 1971-72 to around 9 kgs in 1981-82. The researchers conclude that fish is no longer the poor man's protein in Kerala.

It observed that "viewed from the perspective of the fish-eating population of the state, more investment for fisheries development have yielded less fish for domestic consumption." What is particularly distressing is that fish which provided proteins for poor people has been diverted to feed cats and other pets in rich countries.

In the words of John Kurien, "The main attraction of the smaller fish (which provide protein for the masses) to the deep-sea fishing interests is that such fish are available in bulk quantities. Given the spiralling of world market prices for fish meal, considerable attention will be focussed on the bulk of those smaller, lower prices species for this purpose. Here again, given the interests controlling the deep-sea operations when the option is between fish meal for earning foreign exchange and protein for the masses, the choice is obvious."

Kurien feels that to believe that deep-sea fishing is an effective means of supplying protein for masses is the result of a naive understanding of the logic and language of the market. "To propagate such a policy tantamounts to concealing purely commercial pursuits by proclaiming socially desirable objectives,"he says.

In the case of dairy development, the greatest emphasis in recent years has been on increasing the procurement of liquid milk from rural areas. The village level processing of milk into ghee (clarified butter) and butter has gone down. So the byproduct of village level processing called *chach* is much less visible today. Earlier it was common for better off villagers to give this *chach* free of charge to workers and to other poor families as it was available in abundance. Hence availability of this source of the poor person's protein has also gone down significantly.

This decline in the availability of staple proteins indicates that despite all the lip sympathy paid to the needs of the poor, our development policies still continue to neglect these to an alarming extent. While launching ambitious development programmes, we fail to take into account how these can affect the lives of the poor, to admit our mistakes, learn from them and try to ensure that their requirements get adequate attention through sensitive re-orientation of future policies and planning.

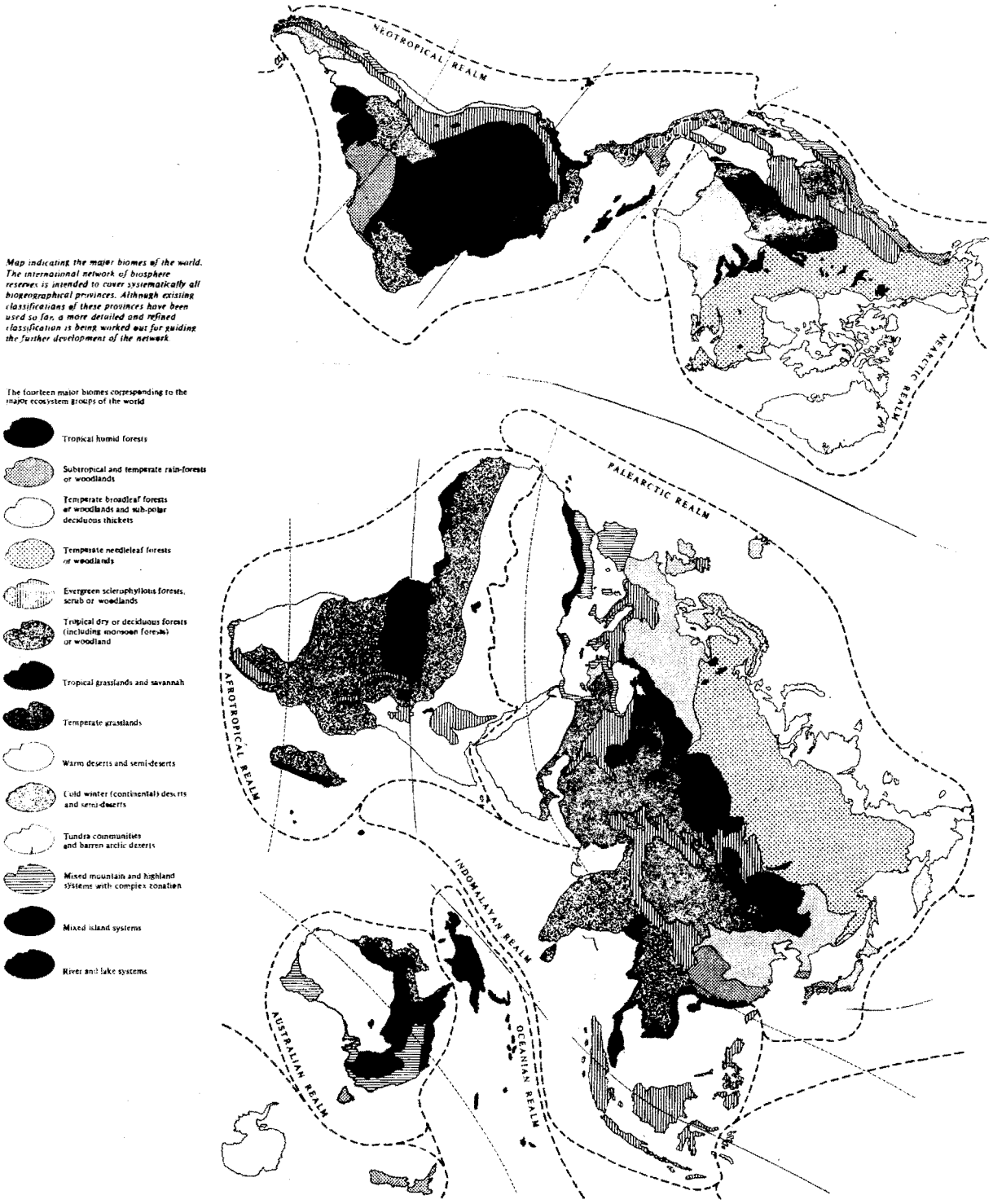
- The Economic Times - 13.08.95



World events: combined judgement concerning likelihood of occurrence and the importance of tourism policy formulation.

- Political shift in the Eastern bloc countries to market Economies.
- Escalation of terrorism and regional conflicts.
- International telecommunication systems and data banks world wide.
- Infrastructure-roads, airports-fails to keep pace with technology.
- Airport facility limitations and air control problems reach crisis stage.
- Increasing degradation of physical environment of host countries.
- Deregulation of commercial transportation carriers becomes the norm in developed countries with market economies.
- Automated data retrieval interactive systems and data bank world-wide.
- Advanced transportation systems predominate.
- Global firms emerge and influence automated world economic policy.
- Infrastructure investments require public-private partner ships.
- Consolidation of the world's computer reservation systems - CRS.
- Greater awareness of history, culture and patrimony in destination nation areas.
- AIDS and related communicable diseases reach epidemic levels.
- Regional economic integration increases economic protectionism.
- Regional areas of the world establish programmes to reduce pollution.
- Two separate holiday periods dominant in developed countries.
- The public and private sectors work together.
- Vertical and horizontal consolidation of tourism industry components.
- Increased growth in special interest influence.
- Labour shortages and value shifts require organisational changes.
- Border formalities of most countries eliminated.
- World-wide stock market crash recurrence.
- Public-wide stock market crash recurrence.
- Public regulations over ecology discourage private investment.
- The four-day work week and annual month-long paid vacations characterise work patterns in most countries.
- Communications and fibre optic cable technology advantage.
- Increase in national and international peace movement.
- Visitors responsible for preserving ecological habitats of the host country.
- Non-traditional work lifestyles become common practice.
- Iraq-Mid East crisis results in stabilising oil price at US $40/barrel.

Global Assessment of Tourism Policy, Tourism Research, p.182-83



Map indicating the major biomes of the world. The international network of biosphere reserves is intended to cover systematically all biogeographical provinces. Although existing classifications of these provinces have been used so far, a more detailed and refined classification is being worked out for guiding the further development of the network.

World Bank's green economics

The World Bank is increasingly turning its focus on environmental concerns. It has encouraged the consideration of these issues in the ongoing revision of the system of national resources accounts and has proposed the creation of environmental satellite accounts as an interim measure.

THE World Bank is giving shape to its version of 'environmental economics' through a number of studies which are in varying stages of progress. The Bank's World Development Report 1992 (WDR), which has as its theme, 'Development and the Environment', is the very first of such studies to have been completed. The WDR in a way provides the logic of the Bank's environmental economics

There are statements in the WDR which reveal the logic that "the world has learnt over the past two decades to rely more on markets and less on Governments to promote development. "The World Bank economists practise neo-classical economics. A market-friendly approach, according to the Bank, is a key feature of its policy and research work programme on environmental problems.

The Bank's latest Environment Report-the second of the annual series - states that "as a first step, a survey was prepared on how environmental concerns can be integrated into economic analysis of projects and policies and that a study thereon deals with four key issues, viz. physical impact of projects and policies, valuation of these impacts in monetary terms, the discount rates, and issues of risk and uncertainity." The main emphasis is apparently on methods of valuing environmental impacts. The annual report candidly submits that "The major need at present is not for the application of the existing methodology and approaches to concrete problems and that "this approach will be a feature of the ongoing work in this area."

By now the Bank has conceded that a framework is needed to account for natural resources consumption and to compute environmentally-adjusted net domestic product and environmentally-adjusted income since such measures would help to recapture environmental services, account for the depreciation of natural capital, exclude certain categories of defensive environmental expenditure and thereby provide better estimates of the real impact of economic activities.

The Bank has encouraged the consideration of environmental issues in the ongoing revision of the system of National Resources Accounts and has proposed the creation of environmental satellite accounts as an interim measure. The Bank had recently published a survey of the experiences of industrial countries with various resource and environmental accounting approaches which evaluated past experience and which extracted lessons that may be of value to developing countries.

The Bank's work on fiscal instruments to address environmental degradation reflects the general concern that policies to reduce degradation have relied on regulatory arrangements that are difficult to enforce and distort behaviour. The Bank is presently developing an analytical framework to evaluate the environmental effects and economic costs of alternative public finance instruments in developing countries with specific reference to pollution control. One of the Bank's recent publications, "Environmental Policy and Public Revenue in Developing Countries" puts forth the following perceptions which are controversial.

"The range of environmental concerns continues to expand and few sectors of economic activity remain untouched. Yet claims on public and private financial resources are already large. How then can environmental policies be made more "affordable"? Regulations and taxes can help reduce environmental damage and developing countries may be better served by following the tax and investment approaches to environmental policy in most situations rather than the regulatory route followed by industrial countries during the past century.

The Bank also proposes to examine the view that environmentally sound policies are economically beneficial and to identify policies that are compatible with sustained development. It proposes to examine at a later date the relation between environmental control and economic growth by constructing a detailed model of these costs and their consequences.

Another ongoing study at the Bank deals with the issues raised by trade liberalisation and attempts to identify conditions with regard to endowment of environment resources, technology, demographic

factors, distribution, etc. that would worsen environment degradation. The Bank hopes that the development of detailed data on industrial emissions will make it possible to estimate pollution and resource use of internationally traded products with greater precision than is currently possible. The Bank is currently preparing a survey of literature on trade and environment. It has, however, conceded that empirical work is needed to estimate the magnitude of the effects of trade liberalisation on environment and to identify the parameters involved. It is also addressing a study on an opposite trend, namely the effect of environment policy interventions on trade policies.

There is an emerging contention that the decline in world commodity prices relative to income indicates that there is no scarcity of natural resources (which is the very antithesis of the Club of Rome's "Limits to Growth" thesis). It is interesting, therefore, that the Bank has initiated research to address the implications of the prevailing commodity prices on the market's perception of natural resources scarcity. This study proposes to examine the impact of technological progress on the efficiency of natural resources use and its impact on the prices of natural resources. Concurrently, the consequences of changes in resource prices on world trade patterns are also addressed as are the effects on developing countries.

The World Bank researches on global environmental issues and concerns are simmering in a melting pot and cover a gamut of vital issues like the global commons and 'greenhouse gases'. The Bank's researches will also cover the significance of global externalities (e.g. i) the effects of global warming on agricultural productivity, labour, migration, and micro-climatic change, ii) the effects of ocean pollution on coastal fisheries and iii) the effects of the depletion of biodiversity on tourism and pharmaceutical industries.

A major research-proposal will cover carbon taxes and tradeable permits and implications for trade, industrial location and transfer of resources across nations. In this regard, to start with, research programmes will focus on

- growth, retarding effect of carbon taxes on developing countries,
- the incidence of carbon taxes
- the design of carbon tax themes and comparison with alternative systems of global permit and
- design of an approach suited for developing countries.

The serious limitation-and a very serious one-that attends the Bank's research efforts is that they are solely based on neoclassical economic analysis. The Bank, as the prestigious journal *'Development'* has commented, keeps in view "only a single model of development which accepts the central role of markets." The World Bank economists ought to be aware that an "Alternative Economics" is already on the anvil and that this will have emerged fully by the initial years of the coming century.

The "Alternative Economics" movement may enable to systematically conserve earth's resources. It places stress on qualitative values and ethical choices, duly recognising that the first concern should be for a one-world economy and no longer wealth of nations and will enable people to take greater control of themselves. The development paradigm that will be based on Alternative Economics will necessitate new ways of living that will drastically cut the present levels of energy-use and pollution, new ways of organising work and eliminate all kind of international trade and debt that impoverish peoples of the South. That, however, will mark the birth of a New World Order. But, for the present, environmental economists have to make do with neo-classical economic tools, faced as they are, with the "Hobson's choice".

- The Hindu - 27.01.93
K. John Mammen



Neglect of agriculture

THE figures for the availability of food in the Planning Commission's mid-term appraisal of the Eighth Plan reveal starkly the extent to which growth in agriculture has slowed down. Per capita availability of food declined from 510 grams a day in 1991 to 468 in 1992 and further to 464 in 1993. It remains to be seen whether the rise to 474 grams per person per day in 1994 grams per person per day in 1994 is an indication that the corner has been turned. On the other hand, the ratio of pulses - a source of proteins for most Indians- to the population has worsened continuously during that period. What all this says, in a nutshell, is that there has been little increase in productive employment or improvement in standards of living for the majority of the rural population. Indeed, far from being given opportunities to escape poverty, they have been impoverished further by the current lop-sided strategy to boost agricultural growth. Sharp increases in procurement prices started first by the Janata Dal Government were continued under the liberalisation policy of the Congress with the intention of improving the terms of trade of agriculture relative to industry, and attracting higher private investment in agriculture. The single major consequence has been that prices of common varieties of rice sold through the public distribution system have risen by 90 per cent and the price of wheat by 70 per cent since 1991.

It cannot, moreover, be said with certainty that this is a short-term outcome and the worst is over. While private investment flows have begun, they will not be of the order or in the form to make a substantial impact on agriculture unless public investment in the rural infrastructure and social sector is raised dramatically. The Planning Commission points out that there was a fall in investment in agriculture under the new economic policy on top of the steady decline in investment throughout the 1980s. This gives an indication of the huge gap in investment that needs to be covered. Where does this cash-strapped Government intend to find the resources? In irrigation, for instance, the shortfall in approved outlays for major, medium and minor projects between 1992-95 has been in the region of Rs. 1,657 crore and available resources appear to be disappearing entirely on administrative expenditure. The alarm bells rung by the mid-term appraisal ought to be heard loud and clear in Parliament.

- The Indian Express - 25.08.95

Liberalisation threatening wildlife: experts

The economic liberalisation programme may have won India many friends abroad, but it has turned out to be a threat to wildlife habitats, say international environmentalists.

Although tiger and other wildlife habitats are fairly well-protected by the country's laws, the Central and the State Governments are systematically abusing the laws for increased revenue, they allege.

"Across the country, essential forest habitat is being lost to mines, logging, hydro and irrigation schemes, power plants, orchards tea plantations, and aquaculture development. Legislation designed to stop encroachment of protected areas is being systematically circumvented or ignored," Mr. Dave Currey, director of the London-based Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), who was recently in Delhi, said.

Areas in and around national parks, tiger reserves, wildlife sanctuaries and even world heritage sites and biosphere reserves have been destroyed, reducing further the habitat available for the rich fauna, he says.

"The Union Government has given the green signal to those who are determined to exploit any of the numerous loopholes that riddle the environmental protection system," says Mr. Ben Rogers, a British environmentalist.

A glaring example, according to a recent EIA report, is the construction of a large cement plant by ACC on the boundary of the Balpakaram National Park, in the Garo Hills of Meghalaya, an area that has the highest density of wild elephants and other endangered species including tigers, leopards, pandas and sun bears.

"The plant and mine sites being built by ACC will cover 14 km and are located precisely within a narrow and intensively-used elephant corridor. Obstruction of elephant movement will stop essential gene flow between populations, and increase human-elephant conflicts." the report says.

The major lacuna, environmentalists say, lies in the guidelines for assessment of environmental impact issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests for clearance of projects.

"The guidelines are vague on a number of counts, and thus allow the most obliging consultants to certify minimum environmental impact," says Mr. Currey.

Projects are rarely rejected on environmental grounds. They are usually given the go-ahead subject to the fulfilment of conditions including compensatory afforestation of an area equivalent to that being lost, or for construction workers to be provided with fuel so as not to put pressure on adjacent forests, or for safe disposal of construction garbage.

"In theory, non-compliance with these conditions should lead to revocation of the clearance and declaration of the project as illegal. But rarely has such action been resorted to," says Mr. Rogers.

What is more, several of the major "protected areas" across the country are yet to receive full legal notification despite their being designated as such.

Even if a protected area does gain full legal notification, State Governments can denotify it by a simple resolution in the Assembly.

For example, the Maharashtra Government denotified about one-third of the Melghat tiger reserve, which was designated a project tiger reserve in 1974 and is home to a wide variety of wildlife and plants.

There is currently a stay on this order after the Bombay Environmental Action Group and others contested the denotification. The group alleges that the forest department proposes to begin tree felling and exploit the forest produce in the area.

The picture is no different in the Prime Minister's State of Karnataka, where, according to the EIA report, the Kudremukh Iron Ore Company has been issued a prospecting licence in the Kudremukh National Park. The park comprises about 600 km of the finest "evergreen" shola forest, rich in both fauna and flora and supports a host of endangered species.

The proposed $14-billion Sankosh hydro project, on the Indo-Bhutanese border, whose canal will pass right through the core area of the Buxa Tiger reserve in north Bengal, will cut it into two halves, with no gene flow among the tigers. A similar situation prevails in almost all sanctuaries and forests in the country.

Environmentalists, however, are not surprised at the Union Government's leniency in such matters," given the "indifference" of the Prime Minister towards environmental issues.

They cite an interview given by Mr. H.D.Deve Gowda, then Chief Minister of Karnataka, in June 1996 to a Delhi-based environmental publication *'Down to Earth'* in which he reportedly said, "I see no relation between liberalisation and environment."

My sole concern is that Karnataka becomes number one in industries in the country."

"The law is not at fault. It is the failure to enforce it and the flagrant abuse of it by the politicians and industrialists, who are prepared to sell the last square kilometre of India to line their pockets," says Mr. Rogers.

"Now that Mr. Gowda is the Prime Minister, he should recognise the long-term needs of India's people, and its environment, and not cave in to short-term industrial interests," says Mr. Currey, adding, "without political leadership, India's tigers, rhinos and elephants, together with many less visible species, will disappear within the next few years." - PTI

- The Hindu - 24.01.97

Forex earnings per tourist decline by 7.5%

Foreign tourists are spending much less in India than they used to before. This belies the tourism ministry's claim that international tourist traffic into the country is booming after several years.

According to the latest government statistics, foreign exchange earnings per head received from the inbound international traveller has fallen from $1245.16 in 1994 to $1151.47 in 1995, a fall of over 7.5 per cent in one year.

The actual earning per tourist fell despite a 12.6 per cent growth in the total number of foreign tourists visiting the country during the period, much higher than that projected by World Tourism Organisation.

The country received 18.9 lakh foreign tourists in the calendar year 1994.

The total number of international travellers visiting India the next year went up to 21.9 lakh, with the country receiving the two millionth visitor with great pomp in early December 1995.

In February 1996 alone, 2.2 lakh foreign tourists flew into the country, a growth of 17.1 per cent over last February when about 1.8 lakh tourist has travelled into the country.

Statistics indicate that arrivals in 1995 outgrew that in 1994 by 12.6 per cent, more than double the WTO projection of 6.1 percent for the region.

In contrast, total foreign exchange earnings during the same period grew at the rate of 7.1 per cent, slightly more than half the growth rate in the number of arrivals.

The 18.9 lakh international tourists had spent about $2353.35 million or Rs. 7366 crore in the country in 1994.

In comparison, the 21.9 million foreigners who travelled into the country the next year spent only marginally more at $2521.74 million or about Rs. 8700 crore (according to RBI estimates), leading to reduction in dollar spending per head.

This trend could put a damper to the grand national tourism action plan announced in 1992, which pegged a next-to-impossible target of 5 million international tourists by the turn of the century. What could be the reason behind this trend?

The boom in business travellers that is choking the hotels in the metros, as well as loss of shine from the traditional tourist spots, are the major factors, say industry observers. Since metro cities are the primary distributing centres for the tourist traffic into the interior of the country, lack of hotel rooms in these cities are discouraging the genuine leisure tourist.

Shashank Warty, area general manager, of the Taj group, says: "Where are rooms in Delhi, Bombay and Madras?

Hotels are running full occupancy, mostly due to the business traveller, in these cities. But the off-city spots are still seeing lesser number of tourists, and fewer still are spending on room nights".

Likewise, Ashok Antaram, vice president marketing of ITC Hotels, attributes the reduction in the per head forex earnings to, what he calls, "depressed leisure circuits".

A combination of factors, according to him, has reduced

returns from these traditional tourist areas which had been the primary forex earning centres for our tourism industry.

He picks out three factors:
a) Room tariffs in the leisure locations, such as Agra, Jaipur, etc, have been forced to remain steady due to reduced demand, thereby reducing real rates with increasing inflation.

As a result, returns from these traditional tourist circuits have fallen;

b) Increase in sheer number hides the fact that the proportion of backpackers and low middle income groups among the international traveller has risen;

c) Higher inflow of foreign tourists also subsumes the growing traffic from our neighbouring countries like Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh, thanks to economic reforms in these countries. Although a welcome trend, the per capita income of these travellers are much lower than the average European or American; hence earning per head is falling.

- Business Standard - 11.03.96, Krishnakoli Dutta

Tourism Dept favours Land Ceiling exemption for hotels

RECOGNISING CONSTRAINTS like limited land availability and a crunch on financial resources, the Department of Tourism has advocated a comprehensive package of incentives to encourage private investment in the sector.

Among the major proposals are exemption to tourism projects from the Urban Land Ceiling Act, permission to raise room capacity in existing hotels, allowing change of land use, wide-ranging subsidies for hotels, air services, etc.

PROPOSED INCENTIVES FOR TOURISM PROJECTS

- Land on 99-year lease for tourism projects
- FAR/FSI relaxation for hotel capacity expansion
- Expenditure tax on room rent only
- Capital gains exemption on sale of land for hotels
- Interest subsidy for hotels, airports/air services
- Sec 80 HHD exemption forex re-invested in renovations
- Sec 80 IA benefit to hotels set up after March '95
- *Export house status for forex-earning hotels/restaurants*

The proposals have been made in a paper on "National strategy for tourism development" prepared by the Department for rapid progress of the industry by the year 2000.

The paper has not been submitted to the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism yet.

The Department has made out a case for extensive subsidies to the private sector by both the Union and state governments. Regretting that the Finance Ministry and the Planning Commission have failed to accord priority to tourism in resource allocation, the Department feels more funds must be drawn from the private sector through suitable schemes.

It has reasoned that the industry has the capacity to generate large-scale employment, even in the most backward and remote regions of the country. Natural resources like rivers, beaches, mountains, as well as heritage properties, ancient monuments, forts, etc, all offer scope for sustainable economic exploitation without damaging the environment or upsetting the ecological balance, it has asserted.

While international tourist traffic to India has grown at a compound rate of over 17 per cent in the last 20-odd years, domestic travel has by far the largest share in revenue from the sector.

Thus it feels that as tourism promotion is largely a state government function, steps need to be taken by them to catalyse an increase in investment.

Among the major state measures it has envisaged are:

- Amendments enabling exemption for tourism industries from the Urban Land Ceiling Act;
- Making land available either free or on 99-year lease on easy terms;
- Railway or trade promotion



organisations with surplus land in tourist centres be persuaded to lease it out;
- Change of land use be allowed liberally in tourism projects;
- Single-window clearance for tourism projects;
- Rationalisation of floor space index and floor area ratio norms to allow additional rooms in existing hotels;
- Encumbrance-free passage across states for tourist transport vehicles;
- All-India tourist permits be issued for five years instead of one as at present:
- 40 per cent subsidy up to Rs.2 lakh for conversion of houses into paying guest accommodation; etc.

The Department has recommended the setting up of mega projects in select tourist locations where land is developed with Central subsidy.

To attract private investment in these and other smaller projects, a host of concessions from the Centre have also been proposed:
- 10 per cent interest subsidy on loans from financial institutions for projects anywhere in the country:
- 25 per cent of Rs 25-lakh capital subsidy for mega projects or for conversion of heritage properties into hotels:
- Capital gains tax exemption on sale of private land for tourism projects:
- 20 per cent capital subsidy for self-employment ventures set up by those who undergo an entrepreneurship development programme;
- 10 per cent expenditure tax on room rent only, with total exemption for heritage hotels;
- Section 80HHD tax exemption for all segments of tourism, under which foreign exchange earnings can then be re-invested in refurbishing and renovation;
- Hotels set up after March 1995 also be exempt from section 801A to be eligible for 25 per cent deduction from profits for 10 years;
- Depreciation allowance be raised to 25 per cent for furniture and fixtures;
- Section 194 (I) exemption for hotels, as room tariff includes charges for using electricity water, telephone, airconditioning, fixtures, etc. A number of import concessions have also been recommended by the Department.

These include export house status for establishments earning foreign exchange; 25 per cent duty on project imports by hotel etc.

– The Pioneers, 14.6.96,
Harjeet Ahlu Walia

Tourism ministry seeks to raise Ninth Plan outlay by 12 times

TOURISM has been a neglected sector in the country and its importance in poverty alleviation and employment generation has not been realised, said the tourism secretary, Mr G Sundaram, while addressing the members of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), here on Wednesday.

According to Mr Sundaram, the policy makers had in the past ignored the tourism sector, since it was considered an elite sector and it was felt that the sector should be left in the hands of the private sector.

The tourism ministry is seeking an outlay of Rs. 5,800 crore in the ninth Five Year plan, nearly 12 times more than the present outlay of Rs. 450 crore. Mr Sundaram said he would fight hard to secure at least a five-fold increase in the plan outlay.

While the ministry has set a target of five million tourist arrivals by the year 2000, Mr Sundaram said he would prefer to increase the target to 10 million. However, to accommodate even five million tourists the number of hotel rooms would have to be increased to 112,000 from the current level of 26,000 rooms. Citing the examples of Cuba and Thailand who have considerably increased their hotel rooms in a short time, he said this could be done in India too. The government had cleared over a 100 foreign proposals in this sector, he added.

Mr Sundaram said the ministry had prepared a strategy paper, which has been circulated to the state governments and specialised associations in this regard.

To give a boost to domestic tourism, Mr Sundaram said there was a need to upgrade airports and roads. He said there were around 129 airstrips under the state governments which should be utilised properly and feeder routes should be operated on them.

The group managing director of RCI, Mr Freddy Dellis, said time-sharing would play an important part in increasing domestic tourism and his company was actively encouraging developers to open up new areas for tourism by locating time-share resorts in new parts of the country. Visitors from other countries would come to the Indian time sharing resorts and bring in tourists with high spending power, he added.

In India, the Taj group has affiliated its first time-share units to RCI. Other household names such as Mahindra & Mahindra and Crown TV are also entering the time-share business.

- The Economic Times - 11.07.96

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Tourism In Tamil Nadu: An Overview

Tourism in Tamil Nadu is not a new phenomenon. Its ancient culture and prosperity has left behind innumerable aesthetic and marvellous temples, mosques and churches scattered around all over the Tamil region. Pilgrimage had thrived around these historical and religious monuments. Even today a large part of domestic tourists are pilgrims.

Hill stations like Udhagamandalam (Ooty) and Kodaikanal attracted a few foreign tourists along with a massive number of domestic tourists. These hill stations are famous for their outstanding scenic beauty and soothing climate. People came here to escape from the heat of the plains for a couple days. Of late, seaside locales like Mamallapuram and Pondicherry became 'pleasure spots' for foreign tourists, large number of domestic pilgrimage and holiday tourists. This was primarily due to the colonial history and culture of these places. The Nilgiris region endowed with British colonial legacy attracts more people from Britain. Pondicherry has a long history of French colonial settlements which attracts French people on a nostalgic trip. An assortment of other foreigners started coming to these places as a result of promotional activities of tourism industry and government.

The recent abrupt increase of tourism in Tamil Nadu has little to do with planning. The self determination/nationality struggles in North and North Eastern states and in Kashmir had taken a violent turn with complete occupation of these areas by military, para-military and police forces. Western countries and media blacklisted the entire Northern India as 'disturbed area' and cautioned people not to travel to these areas. An incident of abduction in Kashmir and a couple of violent acts against tourists put a full stop to tourism activities in these regions. South India, especially Tamil Nadu and Keralam, were converted into alternative sites as a fallout of the 'disturbance' in the Northern region.

Coupled with these happenings is the New Economic Policy and liberalisation and also the tourism economic theories from WTO (World Tourism Organisation). National Action Plan for Tourism (NAPT) 1992 set the pace for the speedy action in India and the Tamil Nadu government jumped at this elusive bait with great vigour. Tourism promotion, as dictated by WTO and Government of India, means more infrastructure investments and provisions for ancillary services. The path for speedy activity in this direction was facilitated by declaring tourism as an 'industry'. (It is interesting to note that none of the policy documents of WTO, Government of India or State governments contain a definition of this 'industry').

The global and local scenario in India acted as a shot in the arm for the government of Tamil Nadu. Liberalisation which put private sector to the forefront, opened up new vistas for corruption to an already neck-deep corrupt government. What is thriving today in the



name of tourism in Tamil Nadu is 'Joint venture corruption' and 'profit digging' by the politician-builder-developer nexus. A single case in Kodaikanal, Pleasant Stay Home case testifies the multiple tentacles of this lobby.*

Political instability in the erstwhile 'Tourist Paradises' gave Tamil Nadu the status of 'Prioritised States' (along with Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and Pondicherry) for massive development of tourism. Accordingly Tamil Nadu has proposed a Master Plan to the tune of Rs.591.34 crores, with assistance from Government of India.

Tamil Nadu has prepared an approach plan identifying areas of priorities for intensive tourism promotion. Special bodies has been created to look into every nook and corner of the state to identity tourism potential. Special Tourism Development Authority (STDA), Hill Area Development Programme (HADP), Special Area Development Authority for 'Heritage Towns' (SADA), all criss-crossing the entire length and breadth of the State with hawk's eyes to locate every shrine, shore, hill, dale and valley to be packaged for tourist consumption.

"Tamil Nadu's great attraction to tourists lies in its magnificent temples, fine beaches, serene hill stations and unspoiled forests and wildlife."[1] In 1994-95, Tamil Nadu government has put tourism on top of their economic agenda and projected it as the single largest economic activity in the State by the year 2000.

Thirty percent of foreign tourists visiting India visit Tamil Nadu. Recently, there is an upward trend in both foreign and domestic tourist arrivals in Tamil Nadu.

Domestic and Foreign Tourist Arrival in Tamil Nadu[2]
(figures in lakhs)

Year	Domestic	Foreign
1989	62.37	3.19
1988	62.71	3.70
1989	62.71	3.70
1990	97.58	3.10
1991	112.27	3.34
1992	131.00	4.03
1993	138.00	4.41

* Gross violation of Master Plan and construction regulations by the private hotelier, Pleasant Stay Home, got Tamil Nadu Government's sanction by a secret Government Order.

TN ecology authority named

The Centre has constituted an Authority to deal with issues relating to ecological protection and compensation in respect of various industries in Tamil Nadu.

This is in pursuance of a directive from the Supreme Court two months ago while disposing of petitions relating to tannery pollution in the State.

The four-member Loss of Ecology (Prevention and Payment of Compensation) Authority will be headed by a retired judge of the Madras High Court.

According to a source, Mr. P. Bhaskaran, retired judge, has been appointed to head the Authority.

The other three members of the Authority will be: The Secretary, Department of Environment, Government of Tamil Nadu, Member-Secretary, Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Delhi and a person appointed by the Central Government to act as Member-Secretary of the Authority. Sources said Mr. B.B. Sundaresan, former Vice-Chancellor, Madras University, has been appointed to the position of Member-Secretary.

A notification issued in this regard by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests says the Chairperson and other members of the authority will hold office for a period of two years from September 30, 1996 (the date of the publication notification).

The Authority, which will have its headquarters in Chennai, will exercise powers under Sec.3 (2) (v) to (x) and (xii) of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, with respect to restriction of areas of operation of industries, laying down procedures and safeguards for prevention of accidents which may cause environmental pollution, examination of manufacturing processes, materials and substances, sponsoring investigations into problems of environmental pollution, inspection of plants, premises etc and collection and dissemination of information in respect of environmental pollution.

It will assess the loss to the ecology and environment in affected areas and identify the individuals and families who have suffered because of the pollution and assess the compensation to be paid. It will also decide the compensation to be recovered from the polluter. The compensation will (as suggested by the Supreme Court) be computed under two heads, viz, for reversing the ecology and for payment to individuals.

The Authority has also been clothed with powers to direct the closure of any industry or class of industries owned or managed by a polluter in case of evasion or refusal to pay the compensation awarded against the polluter. This will be in addition to the recovery from the polluter as arrears of land revenue.

The other functions of the Authority will include framing of schemes to reverse the damage caused to the ecology and environment by pollution in Tamil Nadu in consultation with expert bodies like the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), the Central Pollution Control Board etc. These schemes shall be executed by the State Government under the supervision of the Central Government and the expenditure will be met from the Environmental Protection Fund and from other sources provided by both the governments.

The Authority will review the cases of all industries already operating in prohibited areas and direct relocation of any of them, close permanently or order relocation of tanneries which have not provided adequate effluent treatment facilities and do not have a valid certificate from the Tamil Nadu State Pollution Control Board.

The authority will comply with orders issued from time to time by the Madras High Court and Supreme Court.

It will prepare a statement showing the total amount to be recovered from the polluters, mentioning therein the names of the polluters and the amount to be recovered from each and the persons to whom the compensation is to be paid.

The statement is to be forwarded to the Collector/ District Magistrates of the area concerned who shall receive the amount from the polluters, if necessary, as arrears of land revenue and disburse the amounts to affected persons and families.

The Authority will furnish a progress report about its activities at least once in two months to the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests.

-The Hindu - 17.10.96

Tourism action plan with private consultancy mooted

The State tourism department proposes to enlist the services of a private consultancy in preparing an action plan to make Tamil Nadu an inviting destination for domestic and foreign tourists.

The emphasis of the action plan would be on identifying special tourist circuits and to improve the existing tourist attractions in the State.

Explaining the steps initiated by the department, official sources told *The Hindu* that the private agency would be given a month's time to present its report and the draft plan would then be forwarded to the Centre for incorporation in the Ninth Plan.

Apart from the State Government funding the tourism-related projects and programmes, necessary provision would be made in the action plan to seek financial assistance from external agencies.

Pointing out that already several special tourism areas had been identified in the Tourism Policy brought out during the AIADMK regime, sources said discussions were not on with the newly constituted Board members of the Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation (TTDC) for providing the necessary inputs to give an impetus to tourism related activities in the State.

Meanwhile, the Transport Finance Development Corporation has sanctioned a loan of Rs.1 crore to the TTDC to help purchase 10 luxury airconditioned coaches to the Corporation as part of its exercise to augment its present fleet strength of 23. Out of these 10 coaches, two buses would be shortly purchased from HR&CE Department which had bought the buses during the World Tamil Conference held in Thanjavur.

The members of the reconstituted Board had been asked to pay special attention, among other things, to improve the quality of food served in all the hotels of the TTDC and upgrade the kitchen facilities.

The permission from the Department of Archaeology had been obtained to introduce the 'Sound and Light Programme' at Brahadeeswarar Temple, Thanjavur, sources said.

- The Hindu - 11.09.96

Master plan for Palani, Kodai await govt approval

DINDIGUL, June 17 - A master plan for the integrated development of Palani and Kodaikanal at a cost of Rs 45 crores have been sent for government approval, disclosed Mr C Chandramouli, Collector, Dindigul Anna district.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday morning, he said that a scheme for protection of the Kodaikanal lake, at a cost of Rs.15 crores, has been drawn and sent to the Central Government for approval. The scheme has been readied on the recommendations of the lake preservation and environmental protection committee which visited Kodaikanal last year.

Another plan aiming at developing Kodaikanal and providing infrastructural facilities for tourists at a cost of Rs 15 crores has also been sent for approval, he said and added that special permission is being sought to form the Kodaikanal Development Authority.

The Collector informed that during summer 653 borewells had been dug in the district of which 293 borewells were dug in villages. 120 in town panchayats and 143 in municipalities. He said work on another 150 more borewells is in progress.

A sum of Rs 10 lakhs had been sanctioned for the supply of drinking water through lorries. Owing to drought conditions, Rs 11.75 lakhs had been spent for the purpose. Therefore the government has been requested to sanction an additional Rs 10 lakhs for the same.

As the Vaigai river had gone dry, water could not be pumped from two out of the six open wells in Peranai, the main source of drinking water to Dindigul town.

He said though the daily requirement of water for Dindigul town is 18 million litres, only 3 million litres could be pumped in from Peranai. Therefore, water is being provided from the Autoor Kamraja Sahar Dam which has a stock for three months.

The yield in the two open wells dug at the dam-site was very appreciable and so the municipality had decided to dig two more wells, the Collector said and added that as a permanent measure, a plan has

been drawn to lay a three kilometre pipeline to link Peranai and Thirumangalam channel so that recharging could be done at Peranai.

The Collector stated that a proposal for integrated development of Palani town also has been sent to the government for approval. He said, since there is no scope in increasing tax for permanent residents of Palani, the District Administration has suggested to the government to impose an entry tax for tourists or to permit Palani temple to spare a portion of its income for developing Palani town.

The Collector said his first priority would be towards health and sanitation. An intensive drive would be carried out to clean Dindigul town with the help of voluntary organisations. He appealed to the public to cooperate in keeping the city clean.

The Collector said that steps are being taken to upgrade Dindigul Bus Stand. All encroachments at the bus stand will be removed within a week. Orders have been issued to the municipal authorities in this regard, he stated and added that encroachments in others parts of the town will also be removed.

-The India Express 18.06.96

A special tourism area only in name

The Tamil Nadu Government in its order (GO Ms 133) Information & Tourism (Tourism V) Department dated May 6, 1992 declared three places in Tamil Nadu as 'Special Tourism Area.' And one of them was Kancheepuram Municipality area. The other two are Mamallapuram and Tranquebar.

Some works had been taken up to improve Mamallapuram town. But as far as Kancheepuram town is concerned, nothing has been done, except for installing sodium vapour street lights.

The Kamarajar Road that connects the Rajiv Gandhi Road with Vallal Pachayappar Road is one example, and during many days of the year, remains a cess-pool, thanks to the sewage water let out from nearby lodging houses and hotels.

Some three years ago, a sum of Rs. 1 crore was sanctioned for the re-construction of the town's bus stand. However, not much had been done and buses continue to be parked on a small portion of the stand.

The stand lacks a shelter and commuters are forced to stand in the scorching sun, waiting for buses. For want of public conveniences, the bus stand area has become a large, open air toilet.

In another part of this unfinished bus stand, the parking bays are ready but buses are not allowed into this area. The passenger shelters have reached the finishing stage but this area is being misused it is alleged.

As the bus stand is not ready, buses to Madras, Vellore, Arakkonam, Thiruttani, Tirupati etc., are parked outside the bus stand causing considerable inconvenience to passengers.

- The Hindu - 09.06.96

"Special Tourism Areas"

Approach for '90s

One of the most important decisions of the Government in the current year has been to declare a package of incentives for the tourism at par with the industry and declaration of 'Special Tourism Area.'

This shows a departure in the attitude of Government, about its role of merely running a 'few coach tours' or budget accommodations, to ushering in an era of 'Tourism Growth Centres.'

This also shows the recognition of the contributions of the tourism sector to overall growth of economy, and allocating it priority, attention and importance, needed to reach its ultimate potential, which is enormous.

Special Tourism Areas are being developed keeping the foreign tourist, his needs, and requirements in mind. To begin with Tarangambadi, Kancheepuram and East Coast, covering Muttukadu to Mamallapuram have been declared as Special Tourism Areas.

The main aim is to have a planned sustainable development, integrating local communities, and ensuring their participation in the growth process.

Guiding and channelising public and private investments in appropriate inter-dependent projects, and infrastructure developments.

While taking all the measures for environment protection and preservation of the sanctity of the coastal areas.

As a sequel to special tourism areas, Rameswaram Island has been earmarked as 'Pilgrim Tourism Area.' The approach is going to be the same, but the requirements to be met would be

those of 'Domestic Pilgrim Tourist.' Special tourism areas approach can (1) sustain a whole geographical area,

a) through its manpower intensive nature. For every facility, we need management staff, cooks, room boys, guides, drivers, dhobies, cleaners and so on,

b) through the multiplier effect, with every hotel, one would need milk dairies, vegetable growers, fish cooperatives, sheep and goat breeders, poultry and bee keepers and so on. In addition, coach service, taxi service, restaurants, fast food stalls, souvenir shops, handicrafts and local handlooms, services and recreational facilities for the tourists, and so on, would also be needed,

c) and would cost less, since ancillaries can spring up, by themselves. A little support from banks, to artisans, shopkeepers, Taxi and auto drivers, would go a long way in strengthening the approach,

d) it could also ensure appropriate facilities for the target group, in a short span of time, through concentrated infrastructure development.

Tourism year 1992-93 is going to be intensive tourism development year for us. We aim to give a better deal to the people visiting Tamilnadu. In this venture, we solicit the support and active participation of all hoteliers, tour-operators, travel agents, amusement park promoters, golf course and resort developers, in making Tamilnadu, in the words of our Hon'ble Chief Minister a 'Land of Hospitality.'

C.K.GARIYALI, I.A.S.
Secretary,
Information and Tourism Department
Govt. of Tamil Nadu

– The Hindu - 27.09.92

Beckoning tourists

A vehicle for overall development

FROM surf-swept beaches to wildlife sanctuaries to temple towns, Tamil Nadu is rich in everything that attracts tourists in large numbers, but till recently, comfortable hotels, clean restaurants and other such facilities were found only in a few big cities and hill resorts. Many places of interest were thus out of the itinerary of tour operators and little known to visitors. This scene is fast changing, with facilities available even in small towns and tourist spots which were hitherto almost unknown.

Tourism received a big impetus in Tamil Nadu when it was declared an industry by the State Government three years ago. Besides the State's plans for promotion of tourism. Rs. 34-crore Centrally-funded schemes have been finalised for 1995-96.

Under the Government's area development approach, bearing foreign tourists in mind, private sector investment is being encouraged and domestic tourism promoted. Manpower development in the hotel and tourism industry is in focus, and the accent is on promoting cultural tourism through fairs and festivals, providing facilities for adventure and beach tourism and giving publicity elsewhere in India and abroad to tourist centres and facilities in the State.

A "growth centre" approach is to be followed integrating tourism with the overall development of a place and its people.

Some of the major tourism projects identified envisage the construction of one-to three-star hotels with investment below Rs. 1 crore in centres other than Madras. Coimbatore and Madurai introduction of additional air-conditioned tourist coaches laying of golf course; and licensing of government-approved restaurants. These will be eligible for soft loans, and the Regional Director of Tourism, Government of India will give the clearance for funding by financial institutions. Capital investment subsidy at 10 per cent of the total investment excluding the cost of land and up to Rs. 10 lakh will be provided for new tourism projects.

Other concessions include deferral of sales tax for five years for approved hotels and restaurants, waiver of luxury tax on room for five years for new hotel projects and graded concessions on electricity tariff. New projects would also be given capital subsidy for generators, up to Rs. 5 lakh.

The State Government has chosen select sites as special tourism areas. Among them are the Mamallapuram area in Chengai-MGR district covering the coastal stretch from Muttukadu to Pondicherry; Kanchipuram town, in the same district; and Tharangambadi area in Nagapattinam Quaid-e-Millath district covering the town and areas within a 10-km radius. The first is to be developed into a watersports facility; Kanchipuram is a famous pilgrimage centre; and Tharan-gambadi has many Dutch-built monuments. Special tourism development authorities have been formed for these area, and concessions such as government land at subsidised rates basic infrastructure for communication, transport and municipal services and waiver of sales tax for five years will be extended.

The Centre will give concessions like financial support, exemption from Central taxes and capital and interest subsidies and publicity through Indian embassies and tourist offices abroad.

The Government has further identified Mamallapuram, Kanchipuram, Chidambaram, Kanyakumari, Rameswaram, Tharangambadi, Thanjavur, Kumbakonam, Srirangam, Tiruttani, Palani and Sriperumbudur as "Heritage Towns". Area development authorities are being established in all heritage towns for cleaning and beautifying them, preserving architectural monuments and historical buildings and preventing unplanned growth. Tourist facilities like hotels, restaurants, parks, rest rooms, parking space, shopping areas and recreation centres are coming up in these towns. Proper sewage and waste removal and protected water supply are to be provided, and specific projects implemented with assistance from the State and Central governments and the World Bank.

Adventure tourism is catching on among youngsters from elsewhere in India and abroad, and facilities are being developed at several places in the State. A National Water Sports Centre is being developed at Muttukadu, near Madras, where the aquatically-inclined can take up canoeing and wind-surfing; an annual wind-surfing regatta will also be held.

Trekking routes with camping facilities have been developed in Udhagamandalam (Ooty), Kodaikanal and other hill resorts, and the Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation (TTDC) has begun regular trekking programmes since 1992. The TTDC is also promoting the idea of "Tourism in Tents" for those willing to "rough it out", and in places where tourist traffic is seasonal.

Cultural tourism is a big draw when clubbed with local festivals and fairs. Among the festivals are Pongal in January, throughout Tamil Nadu, Makham festival at Kumbakonam in February, Nathanjali (Festival of Dances) at Chidambaram in March, Chithirai festival in Madurai in April, summer festivals during May in Ooty, Kodaikanal, Yercaud and other hill resorts, Mango Festival at Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri in June and Saral Festival at Courtallam in July.

Skanda Shasti at Tiruchendur, Arudra Festival near Ramanathapuram and Cape Festival at Kanyakumari are being promoted both for tourists and pilgrims.

Other festivals at Pilgrim towns are also to be "packaged" for tourists.

The State Government is also making arrangements for providing paying-guest accommodation as an alternative to regular hotels. A directory of paying-guest accommodation that can be availed of at each centre will be made available to travel agencies and tour operators.

Since 1994, several schemes have been taken up for improvement of facilities at Vaigai, Sathanur and Mettur dams at a cost of Rs. 38.86 lack. The suspension cable bridge across the Cauvery at Hogenakkal is to be completed at a cost of Rs. 5.5 Lakh; Rs. 50 lakh is to be spent on improving facilities for visitors at Kanchipuram, Mamallapuram, Tharangambadi and Poompuhar. These are projects included in the State plan.

Work is under way on the Centre-assisted schemes taken up in 1994-95, which envisage the construction of tourist lodges and reception centres at Villupuram (cost: Rs. 18.78 lakh), Tiruvannamalai (Rs. 39.10 lakh), Tharangambadi (Rs. 24.49 lakh), Thanjavur (Rs. 26.30 lakh) and Pudukkottai (Rs. 18.78 lakh).

Under the State plan for 1995-96 facilities at Hogenakkal are to be improved at a cost of Rs. 10.5 lakh and at Veedur dam near Villupuram, for Rs. 7 lakh. In addition, the TTDC will get Rs. 1 crore capital assistance.

The Centre-assisted projects cleared during this year will cost Rs. 3.4 crore and will cover Kanchipuram, Yercaud, Tiruchendur, Hosur, Vedanthangal, Erode and Rameswaram.

The growth in the hotel industry in Madras and other towns is expected to match the increase in tourist traffic. More than 2,000 three-star hotel rooms and 600 five-star hotel rooms will be added over the next two years. The five-star hotels include Balaji Oberoi, a 305-room project, and the 180-room Holiday Inn promoted by the Dharani Sugar group in Madras. Coimbatore will have four three-star hotels. Some 15 other projects are awaiting clearance in Tamil nadu.

While earlier the growth was restricted to five-star hotels the need for "budget hotels" is being felt with a spurt in the arrival of young tourists from abroad and those from other States looking for clean, comfortable accommodation that is not too expensive.

Among several new budget hotels which have come up in Madras is The Residency, built by real-estate promoters Appaswamy and Sons. The promoters are coming up with another budget hotel in Coimbatore with 113 rooms, a swimming pool and banquet halls. This is expected to be ready by August 1996.

- Frontline - 06.10.95,
K. Satyamurti

Corporates roped in to boost TN tourism

IN A MAJOR initiative to improve its business operations and promote tourism in the state, the Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation (TTDC) is going in for tie-up arrangements with big corporates.

Several major public sector companies were being contacted for ensuring bulk booking of rooms in TTDC's hotels and for organising special package tours for their employees, the state minister for tourism, Mr N Suresh Rajan, informed the state legislative assembly. Moving the demands for grants for 1996-97 for his department, Mr Rajan said TTDC has already tied up with Bharat Petroleum in this regard.

An agreement has also been clinched with Madras Refineries Limited (MRL) for special package tours for over 2000 MRL's employees during July-September 1996, he said. The TTDC proposed to appoint additional selling agents in Northern States to promote tourist destinations of Tamil Nadu, the Minister said. Stating that with the declaration of Tourism as an Industry, the hotel business and operation of tours have become very competitive, Mr. Rajan said TTDC was taking several steps this year to meet this competition. Major hotels of TTDC are to be upgraded at a cost of Rs. 15 lakh, besides important civil works are to be executed this year at a cost of Rs. 35 lakh. Modern kitchen gadgets are to be provided in the TTDC hotels and tourist coaches are to be replaced at a cost of Rs.60 lakh, Mr. Rajan said. The TTDC has registered a significant 12 per cent growth in its turnover during 1995-96 at Rs. 18.93 crore, compared to the previous year. It has also earned foreign exchange to the tune of Rs. 20 lakh during the past three years. The Government has identified three areas to be developed as "Special Tourism Areas", Mr. Suresh Rajan said.

-The Economic Times - 14.08.96

Minister woos private sector to boost tourism

THANJAVUR Sept 28, Ko Si Mani, Minister for Rural Development and Local Administration, sought the help of industrialists to develop tourist spots in Tamil Nadu.

Participating in the World Tourism Day celebration, at Hotel Sangam here on Friday, he wanted the industrialists to adopt historical monuments, unexplored by the tourists.

He said in foreign countries these historical monuments were well preserved, and decried the lack of awareness in this regard in our country.

The historical monuments in Thanjavur are ruined because of government negligence. He urged the private parties to come forward to maintain these places along with the Government. He also urged the parents as well as the teachers to educate children about the importance of this place, pointed out the Minister.

The Government had unearthed rare idols at Thanjavur, Pudukottai and Nagapattinam. All these idols were in the safe custody of the concerned department but due to the lack of proper maintenance of these idols, tourists were not aware of the historical back ground of the same.

Some anti-social elements were engaged in smuggling out idols and other antiques to foreign countries. In Tamil Nadu some agents were engaged in revealing information regarding these rare idols, he said.

Presiding over the function V K. Jayakodi, district collector, said that some private parties were interested in adopting villages like Orathanadu, Needamangalam and Rajamadam where the paintings and other carving of Maratha Kings were still unexplored by the tourist. The Government would like to improve these tourist spots in cooperation with private parties and the Government is going to declare these villages as 'heritage village', he said.

The District is committed to provide basic amenities to all the tourist spots in Thanjavur district as the Government had already declared Thanjavur and Kumbakonam as the heritage towns, the District Commissioner said.

Chandra welcomed the gatherings. Later the Minister distributed prizes to the winners who had participated in various cultural and other competitions. Pazanim-anikkam, MP, Durai Chandra-sekaran, MLA, Prema, principal of Kunthavai Nachiyar Women Arts College, Jeyaraman, District Revenue Officer spoke on the occasion. Mahalingam, Public Relation Officer proposed a vote of thanks.

-The Indian Express - 29.09.96

Auto boom ignites a hotel revolution in Chennai

CHENNAI, Dec 29: Exemplifying the inter-industry linkages, the hotel industry is witnessing a boom in this city following an influx of foreign direct investment in the manufacturing sector, spearheaded by Ford and Hyundai.

The obvious off-shoot of this auto boom has been the heightened activity on the auto ancillary and component fronts. Consequently, the need for support services such as communication, transport, banking, advertising, market research, travel, tourism and entertainment is now being felt more than ever before.

It's perfect setting for the hotel industry to capitalise on the increased industrial activity. Chennai is set to see a mushrooming of budget and luxury hotels very soon to accommodate the burgeoning demand for rooms in the 3-star and above category.

Big boys like Balaji, MAC Group, Dharani Empee et al have entered the fray. Balaji has a franchisee tie-up with Oberoi. MAC Group will make a foray into hotel business with its venture with US-based Raddison Hotels. Dharani has courted Hilton. The Empee Group has signed management contracts with the US-based Marriot Hotels and Resorts and Holiday Inn International. Interestingly enough, there are also many purely local breds who propose to to put up hotels on their own. Tripurasundari Hotels (P) Ltd., Ambika Resorts and Industries and Vaigai Hotels (P) Ltd have also plan to enter the three-star category. What more, there are also companies like G R Thangamaligai, whose core line of business interest has been in jewellery.

If grapevine is to be believed, Chennai will see a couple mega hotel projects in the heart of the city. St. James Court, London, of the Taj Group, has reportedly taken a property adjacent to the Chettinad palace in Adayar on a 99-year lease. Sources aver that St James is planning a five-star hotel aimed primarily at non-resident Indians. Similarly, the French-based Accord Group's has teamed up with a local group for setting up a hotel project near the Gemini fly-over.

Most of the hotels in the five-star category will go on-stream by 1998, involving an estimated average investment of Rs 30 lakh per room. In the three-star category, the investment will be about Rs 11 lakh per room.

Many of the proposed hotels are, significantly enough, coming up near the airport. This is naturally so. For one, there are indications that Mount Road may be demarcated as a restricted area for regulating traffic (similar to the toll system abroad). For another, the concept of 'ring road', as in New Delhi, is gaining increasing appeal here too.

Presently, there are 26 hotels in Chennai (approved by the Government of India) in the 3-star and above category with a capacity totalling to just 3204 rooms and 6408 beds. Statistics reveal that there has been a steady increase in tourist arrivals (business and conventional tourists) at the Madras airport in 1996. From 2,11,460 in 1995, the tourists arrival rose to 2,13,657 tourists in 1996 (till November). This is expected to grow further with the coming of giants like Ford and Hyundai and other MNCs into Chennai.

With existing hotels witnessing over 100 per cent occupancy rates in the budget category (which provides 5-star facilities at affordable rates) and around 80 per cent occupancy rates for luxury hotels compared to 60 per cent a couple of years ago, the demand-supply mismatch justifies the mushrooming of new projects in these categories.

That this increase in demand is sustainable can be discerned by looking into the factors causing this influx. Firstly, liberalisation has brought with it an easier flow of capital across borders. Says Rangachary, secretary-general of the South India Hotels and Restaurants' Association, "Tamil Nadu has certain inherent advantages such as a relatively uninterrupted power supply, lower cost of labour and easy accessibility in terms of two ports and an international airport. This has attracted a lot of foreign investment compared to other states in the south."

According to Narasimhan, assistant director of the Department of Tourism, Chennai, "Conventional tourism has also seen a steady uptrend as a consequence of corporate travellers combining business with pleasure activities such as sight-seeing and exploring the art and culture of the state. The Hyundai team that performed the 'bhoomi-puja' at their upcoming plant in Sriperumbudur recently went on a pleasure trip to Kanchipuram and Mahabalipuram." There is, hence, no rigid division between business travellers and conventional tourists and most people fall under both categories, especially when they are first-timers.

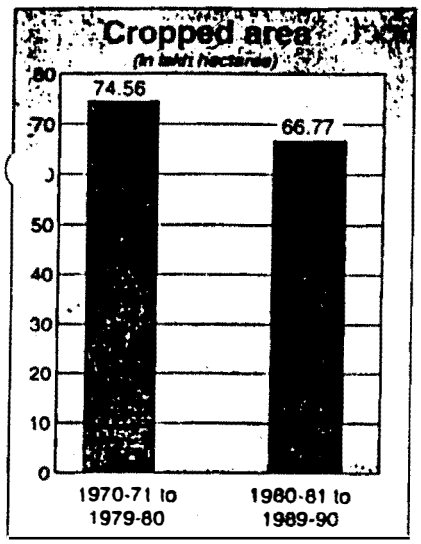
Tulsi Ram, assistant sales manager of Chola Sheraton, however, feels that travellers who come on purely business reasons form 98 per cent of its clientele, which is the case with all city-based hotels. "This has been the trend ever since the liberalisation process took off four years back. There have been an increasing number of international

and national conferences, seminars, fairs and business meetings held in the city of late with an upgradation of facilities, making it possible for hotels to meet the requirements of such shows", he opines.

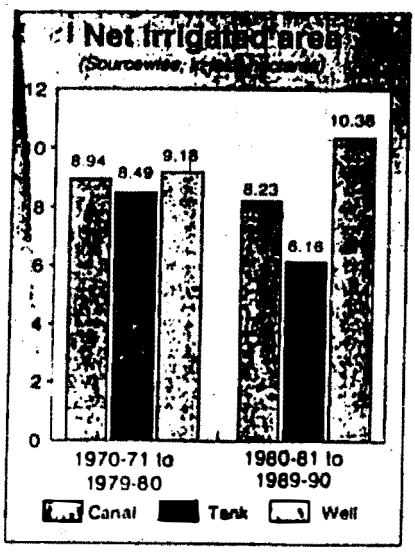
Moreover, the concept of guest houses is also fading. The trend is now moving towards contracting to star-hotels. More corporates feel that the maintenance costs of these guest houses are too high. Business travellers also enjoy many more additional comforts in five-star hotels that are increasingly fine-tuning what they have to offer to the needs of businessmen.

According to Narasimhan, the south has also seen an increased inflow of foreign traffic because north India has been overexposed.

- The Indian Express - 30.12.96,
Sowmya Sivakumar



Note: Figures represent annual average for the decade
Source: Tamil Nadu - An Economic Appraisal, 1992-93



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Source: Tamil Nadu - An Economic Appraisal, 1992-93

3

Emerging Conflicts: Tourism And Infrastructure

Tourism not only needs lot of infrastructure but is basically an industry centred on infrastructure - roads, railways, airways, hotels, restaurants, golf courses, casinos and the like. Naturally, this infrastructure needs space, a lot of land indeed.

The increasing emphasis given for hotels, resorts and holiday homes in every coast, hill, dale and river side threatens the very existence of the local people. The hike in land prices is beyond the reach of middle class too. The conversion of agricultural land for this pleasure industry is increasing. It is evident that Government of Tamil Nadu has decided that the land is not for the survival of her people but for the pleasure of a few.

Race for Paradise by the Leisure Class ?

Tamil Nadu's bountiful natural resources are spread out in the fertile valleys, hill areas and sea shores. The new 'Pleasure Homes' are eating up these regions, converting productive lands into exclusive elite class interests. Intervention by peoples' groups do not reach the core of the issue due to lack of a holistic approach towards tourism.*

The soothing climate, crystal clear water and unspoiled environment has become a curse to local people. The migration of affluent urbanites from various parts of India and abroad to the hill areas of Tamil Nadu is a growing phenomenon. Udhagamandalam, Kodaikanal, Coonoor, Kotagiri, Yercaud etc are now under severe pressure due to this massive immigration caused by greed for a cosy life.

"In fact 40% of Coonoor's population are retired military personnel." [1] Though actual figures are not available, most hill areas has similar settlers, pushing land price to unimaginable levels. This 'virus of affluence' is now infecting Tamil Nadu's sea coasts too, especially after the implementation of the disastrous East Coast Road Project. The entire land on either side of this super-highway (Kanyakumari to Calcutta) is let open for hotels, golf courses, water sports, aquaculture and pleasure resorts.

The Damning Resort Culture

Recently there is a proliferation of companies offering pleasure resorts of various types to the rich urbanites. All such resorts are proposed in pristine areas with rich agricultural

*Sterling Holiday Resorts, Kodaikanal had proposed to build 150 five star cottages which would have polluted Benijom & Kodaikanal lakes since they had no underground sewage facilities. The intervention of Palani Hills Conservation Council (PHCC) through the High Court stopped the construction, when they have build only 35 cottages. But the resort builders moved to a nearby village, 7 km away and bought prime lands. There they have already build 50 cottages and plans to build 100 more.



traditions. Agricultural land of these areas were acquired by these companies by using all kinds of nefarious strategies, including the land acquisition law. Government is all set to support these new genre of profiteers. In the mad chase for land in the villages, they grab agricultural and community land of villagers using all sorts of dubious means.

Resort companies are banking upon the urbanites' need for escape from the maddening city life into something different. Massive amounts are allocated by these companies to inform the urbanites that their life is imperfect, meaningless, and boring. Thus they assure a thriving market for the resorts located in pristine areas. The marketing strategies are in no way different from selling cosmetics - you are asked to hate your own body smell and then you are asked to purchase harmful chemicals to remove the body smell!

The companies facilitate the illusory escape of urbanites on to the body of village cultures. The promises of escape into nature turn out to be a myth because in the resort localities there will be no villages and villagers, the entire areas will be a 'landscaped' city with all its attendant 'qualities'!*

Rules for the Rich Only ?

The zoning regulations in the tourism areas, especially in hill areas and coastal areas, are designed to oust the poor, lower middle class and wage earners from their traditional homesteads. For e.g. the Udhagamandalam Master Plan (UMP) sets the minimum land requirement for a building (including house) at 23 cents.[2]

It is clear that such a limit was set to assist the resort companies and to legitimise land needs of the urban pleasure seekers. Such a limit is a clear violation of the right to shelter of poor and marginalised people which is an inherent aspect of right to life guaranteed by the Constitution of India.

Land Acquisition Act is widely used to usurp land from the poor and marginalised farmers in all the tourism areas. Land acquisition is in the name of dubious 'public purpose'. Government acts as a broker armed with the Land Acquisition Act who is always at the beck and call of the profiteers.

Land thus forcefully taken away from local people at a pittance and sometimes without compensation are given over to international hotel chains, local resort promoters etc at a throwaway price. Infrastructure facilities such as roads are built in these areas at the cost of the people by using public funds to assist the profit needs of these companies and promoters.

*Advertisement of Samyukta Foundations (P) Ltd., declares: "Yes, buying Samyukta Foundations' fantastic lake view cottages and plots at Kodaikanal is buying 'peace of mind'. It is situated on the sloppy lush green Kodai lake. View commands a stunning view of the entire Kodaikanal". Among the facilities provided for 'peace of mind' " Barbed wire fencing with round the clock security"!

The new bureaucratic structures criss-crossing into each other's domains in tourism localities are further complicating matters. Local people are running from pillar to post with their grievances and are let down by all the agencies. In the confusion created, resort companies get their firm hold over the land by using all crooked means at their disposal including high level political patronage.

Legal System: Weapon of the Rich ?

Regions earmarked for tourism promotion became sites of gross violation of rules and regulations by the construction sharks. The elevation (height and floor limits) regulations recommended for constructions in hill regions, Coastal regulations for sea shore constructions (distance from High tide line and height), Sanitation rules of local authorities etc. are violated with connivance of authorities and politicians.*

In the case of Pleasant Stay Home** even the court orders were violated and the entire court procedures made a mockery. The legal process was hijacked with the help of political clout. Government authorities facilitated the victory of construction lobby through dubious orders, in the name of tourism promotion. The local people neither have the means nor the political backing even to retain the minimum land for survival.

It should also be realised that none of these rules and regulations are gifts by governments but won through peoples' struggles and sacrifices. Now these laws have become tools of the new generation of oppressors, for displacing and dispossessing the very people who struggled to formulate such laws.

Pleasure at the Cost of the Poor

The established industrial groups with their multinational menders and the neo-affluent class, the products of liberalisation, are wholeheartedly 'helping' the Tamil Nadu government in building hotels and resorts all over the state. The government has come out with handsome subsidies and tax cuts in its 1992 tourism plan.

Waiving of luxury tax upto 50% for five years, and discounts in power charges and cooking gas are promised to promote tourism. One to three star hotel projects with less than Rs. 1 crore outlay in centres other than Madras, Coimbatore and Madurai will be eligible for loans at 14% interest, capital subsidy at 10% of total investment excluding the cost of land, subject to a maximum of 10 lakh per project. They will also be eligible for deferral of Sales Tax for 5 years on restaurants.[3]

* Construction regulations clearly demarcates the height of buildings in hill regions to be strictly 7 meters consisting of ground floor and one upper floor. Coastal zone regulations prohibits any construction within 500 meters of the High Tide Line (HTL), FSI regulations and height of building to 9 meters.

** Hotel Pleasant Stay Home of Kodaikanal, deliberately violated construction regulations by building 7 floors instead of the stipulated 2 floors. The hotelier explained in the Madras High Court that he was not violating any regulations since the construction being along the slope of a hill, the first 5 floors were below the ground level and only the 6th and 7th floor to be considered as the ground and 1st floor!



It should be remembered that these kind of massive subsidising is offered in the wake of massive cuts on subsidies in the agriculture and food sectors. The policies to subsidise pleasure needs of the rich at the cost of the poor should be seen as a worst form of human rights violation. Those who are not in a position to get three square meals a day have to bear the cost of the pleasure orgies of a minority who suffer from obesity due to overeating.

Who Eats the Tourism Cake ?

In fact it is the private sector that runs tourism industry in Tamil Nadu. While the Minister for Tourism talks about projects in lakhs, the private sector plans in crores. The bureaucrats propose specified enclaves while the private resort builders stretch their hawk eyes farther into outlying villages.

In the year 1992-93 the Union government cleared projects worth Rs.108 crores for hotel industry in Tamil Nadu. The projects are by the Taj Group, in Madras and Coonoor; Sterling Hotels, Yercaud; Mehal Hotels, Madurai; Muthu Hotels, Madras; The Nilgiris Group, Coimbatore, to name a few. [4]

The liberal subsidies, tax cuts and soft loan facilities to private sector for promotion of tourism clearly indicate who benefits by this industry. The figures of tourism profits speaks by itself.

Udhagamandalam, a small tourist locality, has 68 hotels and 46 restaurants in the private sector. The total number of tourist establishments owned by the Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation Limited in the whole of Tamil Nadu is nowhere near the private sector figures: just 26 hotels, 8 youth clubs and 5 restaurants, including one in Delhi.[5] This clearly indicates who eats the tourism cake in Tamil Nadu.

Tourism: The Road to Development or Dependency ?

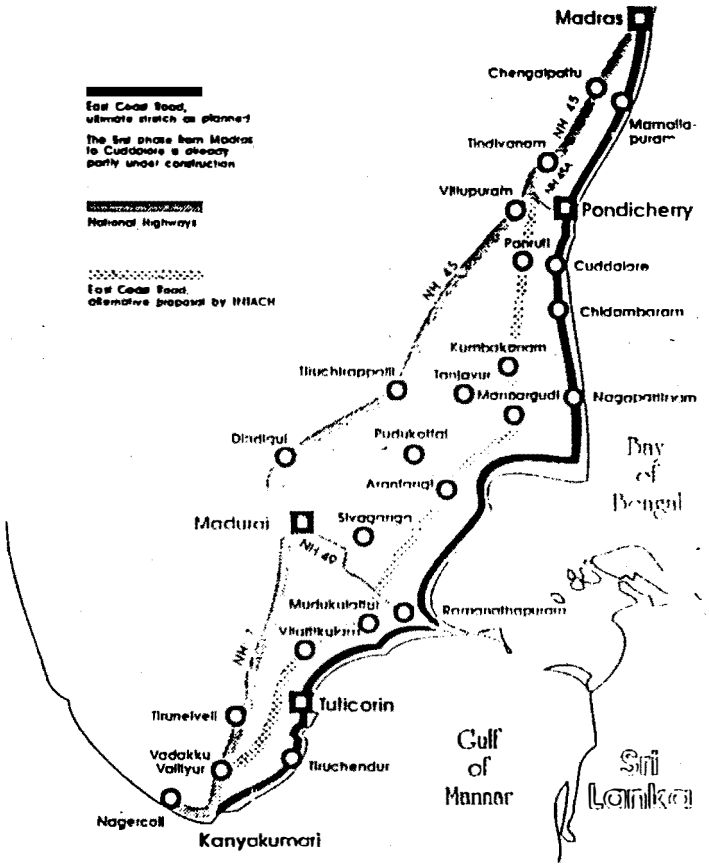
Massive conversion of land for non-agricultural purposes like tourism infrastructure development on the basis of ambiguous benefits is a fallout of the recent policy changes at global, national and state level. This will surely lead to dependency of various dimensions, the worst among which is the emerging dependency of village communities on food imports.

The National Action Plan for Tourism of Government of India (1992) and the Master Plan for Tourism by the Tamil Nadu government are totally silent about the impact on land, food, and survival of people in the tourism destinations. The development model which puts tourism as the major economic activity prompts many questions and is dubious in many respects.

End Note

1 The Economic Times dt.13.12.1992.
2 TAHR July-September 1993 Vol.IV No.III. p.7. for details see Master Plan for Hill stations.
3 The Economic Times dt.24.8.1992.
4 The Economic Times dt.17.4.1992.
5 Nilgiri Guide, Creative Publications. P.77-78 & Tourism Demand No.50, 1994-95 p.12.

Map showing the East Coast Road



Environmentalists assaulted

The members of the East Coast Road Action Committee (ECRAC) and INTACH, Pondicherry, accompanying the Central team to examine issues relating to the East Coast Road, Project, were assaulted last evening in Kadapakkam village by a group of persons.

According to the ECRAC, for over four hours, Mr. Rajendran, Convenor, ECRAC, Mr. Ajit Koujalgi, architect from INTACH Pondicherry and Mr. Srikumar and Mr. Venkateswaran of the Tamil Nadu Science Forum and the members of the ECRAC were illegally detained by the gang outside a shed. The members of the ECRAC and INTACH were assaulted and a statement was extorted from Mr. Ajit Koujalgi that he would withdraw the objections to the ECR. They were threatened that if they did not withdraw the writ petition or if they appeared before the Union Environment Ministry Committee at the public hearing today at Pondicherry, their families would face dire consequences.

As a result of the assault and detention, environmental activists could not reach Pondicherry with the committee, thereby depriving them of an opportunity to demonstrate to the Central team the ecological, social and economic damage that would be caused by building a highway in contravention of the orders of the Madras High Court and the conditions laid down by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests. The ECRAC has condemned the attempts of certain vested interests using violence to prevent environmental activists from putting forward their views to the Union Ministry and to "stifle the constitutional right to resort to litigation." The ECRAC has appealed to the Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi to take immediate action against the assailants.

– The Hindu, 30 May 1996

HC stays implementation of East Coast Road

The Madras High Court has stayed the implementation of the East Coast Road project following an order of the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests suspending the clearance granted to the State government in February 1994.

Mr. Justice Shivaraj Patil who passed the order, however, asked the Environment Ministry to dispose of the representation of the State Government for revocation of the suspension of the environmental clearance as expeditiously as possible giving opportunity to the petitioners to put forth their contentions in the larger interest of the public.

According to the Advocate General, in a letter on April 4, the State PWD instructed the Chief Engineer (Highways) ECR and Rural Roads, to stop immediately all the works including cutting of trees till the State Government got suspension of the environmental clearance. Based on this letter all the contractors had been asked not to proceed with the work, which had now been stopped.

The Judge said from the PWD's letter (which was brought to the court's notice by the petitioners) and the submissions made by the Advocate General, it followed that work on the ECR project shall stand suspended so long as the order of suspension of the environmental clearance was operating.

Initially the Union Government gave clearance for the project in February 1994 subject to certain conditions, including that mature trees should not be felled, there should not be displacement of persons and those already displaced should be adequately compensated and rehabilitated.

The State Government accepted these conditions and the court allowed the project to be implemented.

When the State Government did not adhere to the conditions, the petitioners, Consumer Action Group, INTACH and Mr. M. Rajendran, Convenor, East Coast Road Project wrote to the Environment Ministry about the violations. The Ministry by a letter suspended the clearance granted to the project. The letter said that it has come to the knowledge of the Ministry that the authorities were acquiring more land than what was indicated earlier, which was likely to cause significant displacement of local people.

The State Government, however denied that there was violation and requested the Environment Ministry to revoke the suspension of environmental clearance.

In December 1995, the court by an interim injunction restrained the authorities from felling the trees and the injunction was still in force. The State Government pleaded for vacating the stay on the ground that only matured trees were cut and the road alignment had been changed in such a way that cutting of trees was avoided.

Even as the hearing was on the counsel for the petitioner brought to the notice of the court about the letter written by the PWD to the Chief Engineer instructing him to stop the project. In view of this, the Judge passed an interim order suspending the work on the implementation of the project.

- The Hindu - 11.04.96

Stay On TNHB Construction Near Coast

The Green Bench of the Madras High Court has by an interim injunction restrained the State Housing Board from proceeding with the construction of 100 flats in Valmikinagar, Thiruvanmiyur, near the sea coast as the construction is stated to be in violation of the coastal zone regulations.

The Bench, comprising the Chief Justice, Mr K.A.Swami, and Mr. Justice J.Kanakaraj, however, said the injunction was without prejudice to the right of the respondents - Home Secretary; Housing Board; Secretary, PWD and Secretary, Union Ministry of Environment and Forests - to seek modification or vacation of the order.

The interim injunction restrained the respondents from permitting or continuing with the construction of residential apartments in the lands adjoining Plot No.15 on the south eastern side of III Seaward Road, Valmiki Nagar, Tiruvanmiyur pending further orders on this petition. The petitioner, Mr. V.R.Menon, of Valmiki Nagar said the plot was 200 m away from high tide line. He said the Union Government had issued a notification of February 19, 1991 declaring that there should not be any construction activity in ecologically sensitive areas. Moreover for projects exceeding Rs 5 crores, environmental clearance was necessary. The area upto 200 m from the high tide line was to be earmarked as 'no development zone' and no construction should be permitted in this zone.

The area in and around the proposed construction was not a 'developed area' as this plot did not have any existing roads for access, drainage and approach roads. He said there were few illegal

constructions 300 meters away from the site on the north eastern and south eastern sites, which had come up without proper planning permission. The petitioner pointed out that the Supreme Court had also directed all the State Governments to meticulously follow the notification and not to undertake any activities within the zone. However, the Housing Board was constructing the apartments in contravention of these regulations.

He said on coming to know about the proposed construction he had sent a notice to the Board on January 2 stating that the construction would be illegal and contrary to the notification but there was no response from the Board. If these housing units were allowed to be put up they would gravely affect the environment. Also construction of three-storeyed buildings on the coastline would result in depletion of groundwater and would further block the sea breeze from entering Valmiki Nagar. Hence the present petition to forbear the respondents from carrying on any construction activity.

The Hindu, 20/2/97







DVAC seals 2 seaside resorts of Sasikala

CHENNAI, Oct 25: The Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) officials have sealed two palatial seaside resorts owned by former TN Chief Minister J Jayalalitha's friend N Sasikala and her family, off the Bay of Bengal at Sholinganallur, nearly 40 km from the city. The properties are being valued at about Rs 9 crore.

Information about the resorts was unearthed by the DVAC recently when they were going through the records of other properties owned by the family members of Sasikala. Like other houses, these resorts have been covered by a big compound wall. Situated on a two acre land, the resorts have been adorned with several luxuries. They are a class apart compared to the other houses in the vicinity.

The entire ground has been provided a flooring with mosaic tiles and the resorts are constructed in a fashionable way. The resorts have got about 20 rooms and and the cost of construction is estimated to be at least Rs 5 crore. Source said the building had been lying idle for the last one year.

Though most of the work is over in one resort, the work in another is not yet over. Both the resorts have been sealed by the Vigilance officials.

The construction, its design and the expenditure on the buildings, take it to second position compared to the 200 acre palatial farm house at Sirudavur.

Two swimming pools have been constructed inside the complex. A small compound wall has been constructed separating the resorts. They are only a stone's throw away from the sea. One can have a full view of the sea from the first floor. It is learnt that Sasikala had plans to rent out the buildings but later had second thoughts.

The houses have cupboards and drawers made of wood. A number of lockers have been constructed in the rooms and are yet to be fitted.

Apart from these bungalows, three multi-storeyed buildings have been left half constructed near the VGP beach resort. It is learnt that the construction was abandoned at this stage following the AIADMK's defeat in the elections five months ago.

Even the watchman has fled the place fearing the worst. The house is now deserted with the gate locked. The ground has not been laid properly like the other buildings acquired by the group and is now covered with rubbish. All the granites bought and transported to these houses have been left abandoned in the area.

Vigilance officials are probing the acquisition of the land by Sasikala and her family members.

One similarity about the buildings are that polished granite floors had been laid in all the houses of Sasikala and several of the buildings are of similar design.

With these houses, the number of properties acquired by Sasikala and her family members have come to around 15 in the coastal area.

- The Indian Express - 26.10.96, P.K. Sajeesh

Greens oppose road project in Nilgiris

UDHAGAMANDALAM: The Department of Highways and Rural Works, Coimbatore has proposed to lay an asphalted road from Masinigudy in Nilgiris to Bhavanisagar in Periyar district, it is learnt.

The Tamil Nadu Green Movement has opposed the project and would do every thing possible to prevent it, Green Movement general secretary A. Rangarajan said in a statement. He said the proposed road would pass through the thorn forests of Sigur, Yazithottham, Anaikatti, Hallimoyar, Kallampalyam and Thengomarahada. The road has been divided into nine segments and the total cost would be about Rs 9 crore.

If the road was taken up, it would completely truncate the large habitat and would lead to serious fragmentation of the forests. Elephant population migrates to northern part of Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve (NBR) and the eastern and western parts of the NBR and if the road was formed the animals would lose their traditional route.

- The Times of India - 25.09.96

Time for action

The Pleasant Stay Hotel affair

THE Kodaikanal hotel case throws up several interesting issues of public interest for consideration.

First, the role of the Government and its officials in environmental protection. The fundamental basis of vesting power in governments is the belief that they will enforce the law and advance the public interest. This case shows that the opposite, in fact, happens. At all levels, be it the township officials, district authorities, the Secretary to the State Government, the Minister or the Chief Minister, the Government acted to aid the violator.

The local authorities took little concrete action to prevent the illegal construction even when it was clear to everybody that its planning permission was being violated. Even after the injunction order of the High Court, the local authorities neither enforced it nor complained to the court of the flouting of the order. At the State Government level, it was worse, with the mode of assistance changing from passive observance to active abetting.

Notwithstanding large-scale violation of building rules and construction in defiance of a High Court order, the Government ordered relaxation of rules to regularise the construction. To achieve this, a protesting Secretary, the only official in this entire scenario who did his duty, was transferred (in hindsight, Ministers might now see the value of an upright officer). The copy of the government order was denied to the petitioners in the case. During the pendency of the court proceedings, laws were amended and a fresh G.O. was passed to try and get over the legal challenge. The pretence of enforcing laws was given up.

Were this an isolated instance, we may not have cause for alarm. Unfortunately, this kind of episode and attitude is re-enacted many times, though perhaps in less dramatic and attention-catching times and circumstances.

Robert Reinow, Professor of Political Science at the State University of New York, Albany, had made some perceptive observations on the changing character of government. He has also drawn attention to the increasingly important role for public interest groups.

Reinow writes:

"But worse than corporation funding is the subversion of government agencies to the role of environmental exploiter. The public interest which should be championed by the agencies with their regulations is ignored or perverted, as the 'iron triangle' of special interests, bureaucrats and committee chair-person form their unholy alliance. This means that the public conscience is entrusted to volunteers in public interest groups, a sacrificial burden of weighty dimensions...

"The outstanding feature of modern political life is the shifting of the burden of defence of public interest to civic volunteers. Organised, they must dig into their pockets to hold their groups together; they must respond to calls for protests, launch petition drives, simulate letter writing campaigns, conduct rallies, attend hearings and, in general, mortgage the time of their personal lives to an unprecedented extent. Keepers of the social conscience, they express themselves openly and aggressively. When the record of the environmental movement is finally registered, the emphasis will be on the new breed of citizenship it fostered."

He adds:

"What is becoming clear is that the restructuring of the democratic process has altered the pattern of citizenship. Where once the public official as in the days of Washington or Jefferson has a deep and honest sense of public sacrifice, we are today witnessing the close collaboration of special interests with governmental agencies and elected officials. In the environmental field, the government too often emerges as the advocate of exploitation. This is in large part due to the subtle private and usually corporate pressures. Pressure has become a science that destroys the governmental shield the citizens have erected to protect themselves. It is necessary for the government to guard against such pitfalls. The choice is between technological progress which proceeds without adequate regard of its consequences and technological change that is influenced by a deeper concern for the interaction between man's tools and the human environment in which they do their work."

These passages were cited with approval in a judgment rendered by Justice H. G. Balakrishna of the Karnataka High Court (AIR, 1992, Kar. 57). We cited them in the Pleasant Stay case. The description of the role of the Government seemed to fit. So also that of public interest groups. The environmental public interest group in this case, the Palani Hills Conservation Council, did pretty much all that Reinow speaks of. And did it with a persistence that was admirable. A reminder to us that those who undertake an action in the public defence do it for society, and therefore must battle on, even when an unfriendly government stacks the odds against.



Let us be thankful for India's public interest jurisprudence which permits citizens to move the courts against public wrongs caused by our malfunctioning political and executive branches. This judgement reinforces the belief in, and the necessity for, an independent and strong judiciary (for mere independence is not good enough in our times). Justices M. Srinivasan and S. Jagadeesan have restored the balance in favour of public interest and reinforced Benjamin Cardozo's famous dictum: "The final cause of law is the welfare of society."

Accountability is another major issue. We have a nil accountability situation in the area of environmental degradation and violations of building rules. Town planners do not seem to be responsible for buildings coming up without sanctioned plans, or for sanctions that violate the rules. Development authorities do not seem responsible for chaotic and skewered growth that by no definition can be called planned and orderly development. Ministers do not seem responsible for granting large-scale exemptions that make a mockery of the rules they are supposed to enforce. Fire safety safeguards have been routinely relaxed in Tamil Nadu; yet no Minister has suffered on this score.

The question is not merely whether a particular Minister resigns following an adverse court verdict; it is a much larger issue of accountability at all levels, starting from the top, for acts or omissions that are patently illegal and detrimental to the public interest.

Individual cases have their value in highlighting problem areas. To some extent, they may have a deterrent value. However, decisions in individual cases are no substitute for the systems reform that is necessary if we are to deal with the problem effectively. A key area of review and reform is the power of exemption that statutes invariably give to the government. More often than not, such power is misused for personal gain. In the early days of our Republic, the Supreme Court upheld such grant of wide power on the ground that it would be only exercised by Ministers and Secretaries, high officers of the government.

Regrettably, the standards of these high officers have fallen rather steeply. The Supreme Court itself has made unflattering observations on the lack of purity in present-day holders of public office. The rationale of vesting wide discretionary power is no longer present; indeed, all available evidence points to the need for strict checks on our leaders. Excessive discretion and minimal accountability have been the hallmarks of our political system. Rulers have benefited and people have suffered. It is time for a reversal.

Any systemic reform will not be effective unless it squarely focuses on and deals with corruption. Corruption has become so widespread that it is assumed to be, and probably is, the motive for every wrongful action of government. The learned judges in the Kodaikanal Pleasant Stay Hotel case have not found that the impugned orders were passed for corrupt gain; they confined their finding to "non-application of mind". However, facts have an uncomfortable tendency to speak for themselves, and common people will make the plain statement - "These were not routine orders (one hopes not); they went well against the spirit and letter of legislation specially enacted to preserve the environment in hill-stations in Tamil Nadu. There had to be some reason why these orders were passed" - and ask the plain question - "If they were not passed for corrupt gain, why were they passed?"

A lot of action is required if we are to root out corruption. There is much that can be done by way of creative legislation, systemic checks, transparency and personal accountability. For the limited scope of this article, I would only point out that there is a strong connection between corruption and real estate. A great deal of corruption money is generated by exemptions, dispensations, favours and the proverbial Nelson's eye applied to land and building transactions. And a great deal of corruption money is used to buy real estate.

System reforms that streamline the land and building industry, reduce discretion and bring about accountability will sharply reduce the flow of corruption money from this sector. Investigations into ownership of choice real estate and the source of money for such acquisitions are not difficult to launch and pursue. And, finally, since such money was obtained by causing public loss (the definition of corruption), it is only reasonable that such properties should be confiscated and used for public purposes.

Sriram Panchu is a lawyer who practises constitutional and civil law and takes up public interest causes on environment and consumer protection. He appeared for the successful petitioner in the Kodaikanal Pleasant Stay Hotel case.

- Frontline - 05.05.95

New guidelines to curb building boom

Investors are flocking to Coonoor from Coimbatore, about 55 km away. But a recent ban on construction may save the hill resort, says K C Krishnadas

WITH Coonoor attracting a lot of the tourist traffic that used to head for Kashmir earlier, one would have expected land prices and rents in this hill station tucked away in the Nilgiris to go through the roof.

But no such spectacular thing has happened, particularly in comparison with the rise in prices in other parts of the country. And now the last straw has come in the form of a ban on all construction until new guidelines are issued by Madras.

The ban came into force in May, when Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalitha visited Coonoor, and seems to have been prompted by the recent spate of development, which has marred the natural beauty of the place.

The new guidelines - which have been drafted keeping conservation a priority - have apparently been drafted already, but they are yet to reach the municipal authorities in Coonoor. Meanwhile, only those projects which were sanctioned before May are carrying on construction.

The confusion is breeding resentment, with many prospective builders considering approaching the courts if the guidelines do not come through soon. And, as Coonoor-born architect Vikram Devaraj points out, construction is continuing because the rules are simply not being enforced properly. "The ban on construction is not really justified," says Devaraj. "New guidelines will be welcome, but they would make a difference only if, properly implemented. The existing rules were good enough, it was because they were not properly enforced that Coonoor was getting despoiled."

But the ban has been welcomed by older residents, since it shows that the state government wants to prevent Coonoor from going the way of most hill stations, Ooty being a case in point. But it has badly hit people who plan to build houses in Coonoor.

Before the guidelines are released, they cannot approach banks for financial assistance. And most of the construction in Coonoor is for residential purposes, points out Devaraj. A few small office buildings for the tea industry, makes up for the rest.

In fact, retired defence personnel and their families make up nearly 40 per cent of the town's population. But there has been a steady influx from Coimbatore (about 55 km away) and from Bombay, which has pushed up land prices at least five-fold in the last decade.

The most preferred residential locality in Coonoor today is Grace Hill, followed by Quail Hill and Porter Avenue. Five years ago, a cent of land (approximately 435 square feet) used to cost between Rs. 15,000 and Rs. 20,000 on Grace Hill. Now one would have to shell out anything from Rs. 45,000 to Rs. 50,000.

The price hike of commercial land has more or less kept pace over the last five years. Naturally, Coonoor town has been spreading thanks to the pressure on land. Elk Hill, where some 55 residential sites have been formed is one instance.

The tea estates and the presence of the United Planters Association of South India (UPASI) is probably the only commercial face of Coonoor. UPASI's Coonoor office of the site of its annual sessions and this has prompted retired planters to buy land and stay here. They too know the investment value of Coonoor. Ravi Khandige, manager of the Taj Garden Retreat (formerly Hampton Manor) says rents have trebled in the last three years. And a house with one acre of garden space, which cost Rs. 1.5 lakh in 1978, now costs as much as Rs. 35-40 lakh.

Major corporations are moving into what looks like a promising market. The Kothari Industrial Corporation Limited has nearly two dozen cottages in Glendale Estates.

Brook lands, adjacent to a stream three km outside city limits, has been developed as a residential layout by the Kotharis. About 100 sites have been carved out of this area, earlier part of a tea estate. Construction was left to individuals and several houses have come up. A few sites are still available, but prices have increased from around Rs. 7000 a cent in 1982 to around Rs. 20,000 now.

If industrialists are not developing the estates to sell them off, they are buying them. Guest houses of some blue chip companies are to be found in Coonoor. So popular is this little resort among city dwellers that local residents have found it profitable to let out their homes as guest-houses for short durations.



Now, a hotelier from Bangalore is developing about 50 independent residential houses on the Kotagiri road. Well planned, several of the houses have been booked and construction is already in progress.

The residential boom has also hit the tea industry, responsible for the first eyesores in Coonoor. The Coonoor landscape was unblemished until tea warehouses began to be built. There was never any fixed warehousing area and the Tea Association planned to get some land outside the town, but the plan is still on hold.

With residential land bringing in quick money without tears, some tea estate owners have also been attempting to convert at least part of the estates into residential sites. Opposition from the Tea Board and labour has, however, checked this tendency to someextent. But some lovely pear gardens have not escaped and are being converted into more lucrative residential units.

But isn't municipal control basically the job of the corporation? In fact, it is taking an active interest in the problem, but with scores of Sri Lankan refugees being brought to Coonoor, much forest and private land around the hilly paradise has been encroached upon.

The water supply system is of 60 years' vintage and there is no proper sewerage system. Water is pumped from the Bandamai spring into Ralaih Dam, located some seven kilometres from Coonoor but now the dam has to be desilted. Plans to desilt the dam were drawn up over two years, but nothing has been done till date.

Three years ago, there was a major water shortage. While the electricity supply is adequate, other infrastructure has simply been unable to keep pace with Coonoor's growth rate.

Houseowners say that rules formulated by the Town Planning Committee in the 1940s and 1950s had been updated in the 1970s but without allowing leeway for future growth. They are angry that staff in the municipal office are not recruited locally. This, they say, bodes ill for the region, because only those born and bred here will give Coonoor's quiet beauty priority over development.

Even when the new guidelines come through, there could be a fresh storm of protest, since each plan will then have to be cleared from Madras.

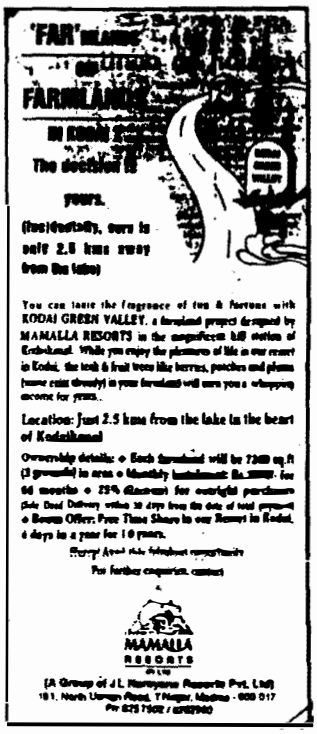
Devaraj, who says he does not accept clients whose project do not go with the landscape, is still waiting for a copy of the guidelines. But once the details are clear at least construction will pick up again in Coonoor.

- The Economic Times - 13.12.92


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MAMALLA
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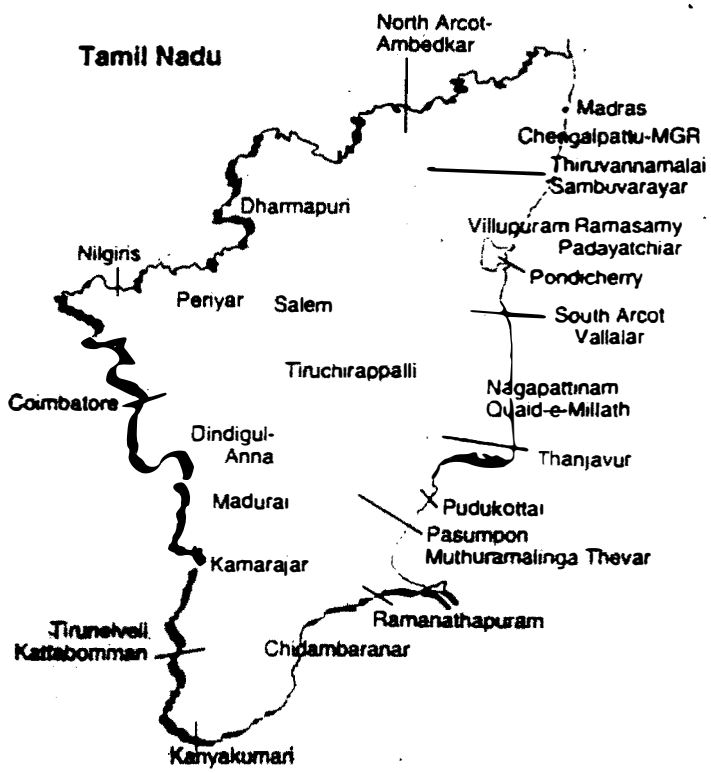
Distribution of workforce in Tamil nadu (1991)

	No. of workers (in thousand)	% to total
Cultivators	5,664	24.84
Agricultural labour	7,896	34.63
Livestock, fishing, hunting & plantation	463	2.03
Mining & quarrying	69	0.30
Household industry	803	3.52
Other than household industry	2,395	10.50
Construction	489	2,14
Trade & commerce	1,980	8.68
Transport, storage & communication	704	3.09
Other services	2,335	10.24
Total	**22,799**	**100.00**

Degree of urbanisation

	(% of urban/ total pop.)	Town density (towns/ 1000 sq km)
1901	14.15	0.93
1911	15.07	1.15
1921	15.85	1.33
1931	18.02	1.53
1941	19.70	1.73
1951	24.35	2.02
1961	26.62	2.02
1971	30.16	1.85
1981	32.96	1.88
1991	34.30	2.00

- Front Line - 06.10.95



inflow which could damage ecologically fragile regions. By adapting this term the forest bill uses it as a weapon against local people from entering the forest for their livelihood. Of course it cannot ban the leisure tourist who is invited into the forests with red carpet. Nor the tourism industry which it promotes with tax cuts and subsidies, building resorts with hot water swimming pools and shopping arcades right in the middle of reserved forests.

With two biosphere reserves, one in the Nilgiris and another in the Gulf of Mannar, Tamil Nadu is the cream of eco-tourism in India. With 14 wild life sanctuaries and five national parks including a marine national park covering a total forest area of 2834 sq.k.m. the government is all set to reap the foreign exchange. Every effort is made to infrastructure development and new programmes for adventure tourism to attract hoards of tourists into this region.

But the people who are part and parcel of these regions are nowhere in the picture. They could be 'rehabilitated ' to some barren rocks away from the regions of livelihood or could take up menial jobs in the resorts or sell their culture and be part of those 'multitudes who are directly and indirectly employed' by the fastest growing industry, tourism.

Nilgiris: Blind alley to profit

Ruthless exploitation of nature and resources initiated by the colonialists continues till today unchanged in the Nilgiris Region. Even today Colonialist John Sullivan's ghost roams around the tourism brochures on Udagamandalam. While the patriotic Latin Americans have categorically declared: Columbus did not 'discover' instead, invaded us. When the greed for blind profiteering by the moneyed class exceeds, nature has her in-built mechanisms to expose her wrath. Over exploitation of nature and resources, ignoring the resourceful knowledge of the local community and even the limited scientific knowledge has led to disastrous calamities to nature in these regions.

Perpetual floods and land slides are haunting these regions in the last two decades. There had been more than 350 major and minor land slides in The Mettupalayam - Coonoor and Mettupalayam - Kotagiri Sections.[6] Mono-culture tea cultivation initiated by the British Colonialists, still continues with multinational and public sector occupying more that 53% of the total cultivated area, from steep slopes to the road side and meadows without proper soil and water conservation. Depletion of forest for extending the plantations and plantation related fuel needs desertise the region.

Tourism Industry: Cause for Land Slides

The undue protection tourism industry enjoys in the rhetoric of 'no smoke industry' and the ability of the private sector's black money to buy and silence any opposition has given rise to mushrooming of hotel industry in the Nilgiris region. The extra thrust given to this industry to attract more tourist requires more infrastructure. Tourist centres in the Nilgiris region being small townships, the hotel industry pushes itself into the hills and agricultural

areas. Loading of the steep slopes with heavy concrete multi-storied buildings is a major cause for land slides. "All the multi-storied hotels in Ooty and Coonoor have been built right on top of hills unmindful of the risk involved".[7] Hill areas being geologically fragile is prone to land slides. But the greed for profit overtakes all safety measures and the constructions continues unheeded.

Heavy vehicular traffic in these regions, on the criss-crossing roads are another major cause of land slides, the devastating contribution of the tourism industry. Uncontrolled quarrying for the benefit of tourism related constructions also leaves its impact to the disaster.

Tea plantation alone sucks off Rs.150 crores annually, one-tenth of the National production, from this region.[8] The hidden profit of hotel industry and travel services is anybody's guess. But the questions to be asked is how much of these profits goes to the preservation of nature? What measure can the state and central governments take to plough back atleast a percentage of the profits to the unending and irreparable destruction these industries cause to the nature, for restoration? Or more fundamentally, can any amount of money restore the ecology which has taken millions of years to form an ecosystem?

Water: Life saviour for pleasure

Major portion of precious water in the Nilgiris is consumed by the plantations, hotels and resorts for their private profits, the very 'destructers' of the forests and catchment areas. A hill area like Udhagamandalam is facing acute water shortage during the summer months.

Nilgiris hills is one of the major catchment area with its innumerable streams, the major contributor in Tamil Nadu's irrigation and power generation. "No less than 1100 streams originate in the four major watersheds of these hills. The rivers Moyar and Bhavani, formed by these streams, are dammed at Bhavani Sagar to irrigate 2.5 lakh acres of land in Coimbatore and Periyar districts. The water then contribute substantially to the Cauvery. By damming the rivers upstream, the Nilgiris produce 40% of the total hydrel power generation of the state." [9] The majestic forests, the high altitude and the forest cover-related climate, generate water to the state which otherwise has a dry climate. But there is a visible uncertainty and decline in the rain fall pattern in the Nilgiri region. [10]

RAINFALL IN NILGIRIS DURING 1902-1990

Period (years)	Mean annual rainfall (in mm)	Average number of rainy days
1902 - 21	1415	106
1922 - 41	1300	94
1942 - 60	1360	99
1961 - 90	1174	95

The alarming rate of depletion of shola forests and meadows for plantations and tourism related construction industry may be a direct link to the climatic changes and the decrease in the rain fall. The industries are capable of violating and taming the laws in their favour. Forest conservation and protection rhetoric of the politicians and the forest officials are meant only for the poor who live by the forests.

DEPLETING SHOLAS AND MEADOWS[11]

Sl No	Place	Sholas (Hectares)		Meadows (Hectares)	
		1849	1992	1849	1992
1	Emerald	550	450	2025	375
2	Avalachi	--	850	1450	625
3	Melbhavani	--	275	--	1300
4	Sillahalla	725	150	3075	25
5	Kunda	725	625	1200	150
6	Devarsholai	900	125	3800	0
7	Kothibenu	775	150	2425	75
8	Kethikatteri	100	0	1450	100
9	Porathimanthu	200	175	625	300
10	Mukurthi	1050	125	1250	600
11	Paikara	1000	350	3550	125
12	Santhinalla	1125	225	4725	100
13	Parsons valley	375	170	950	0
14	Udagai	325	25	675	0
15	Naduvattam	750	125	1175	375
16	Paikara River	300	75	900	100
17	Anikorai	400	50	1925	25

Tourism industry is the ill omen in the life of the local people in Nilgiris. Star hotels and resorts pose grave threat to the drinking water of the local people by their wasteful consumption. Average water consumption in star hotels is 36 times more than the average use of water by a person living in an ordinary hotel or home. Water meant for the domestic agricultural activity of local people is siphoned off by the tourism industry for pleasure, leaving the local farmers helpless. The industry tries to overcome the water shortage by exploiting ground water which again have dangerous fallouts.



Protecting Nature or Protecting Tourism ?

According to the Draft Wildlife Tourism Guidelines for India, 5 million hectares of forest with the status of 'protected area' is earmarked for tourism in the pretext that only tourism could protect the wilderness. There is no mention of the forest dwellers or the local people nor do they have any role to play. The entire forest is at the mercy of the tourists with only the bureaucracy to manage even the wild animals which have to parade before the tourists every time the tourist comes for an 'animal sighting.'

Shift to nature-based tourism occupies every glossy tourism brochure today. Nature becomes 'places of interest' to tourism industry. Policies to attract more and more tourist to nature tourism and make their stay longer with no restrictions whatsoever, is what tourism industry and Tamil Nadu government preach today.

The vibrancy of nature, its various and minute organisms and its inter-relationship and the people who live and maintain the delicate balance becomes irrelevant to the policy makers in their mad chase for profit. Commodifying nature and people to be 'gazed at' reflects the 'concern' of the ruling class to their own people.

Pushing hordes of tourists into virgin forests without considering its impact leads to total extinction of the forests itself. Concerned people and groups have studied the carrying capacity impacts of such unchecked tourist traffic especially in forest areas. Neither the tourist nor the environment is benefited by the mass tourism.

Uncontrolled tourism into wilderness is today touted as the only conservation tool for endangered eco-systems. Deeper studies are increasingly pointing to the danger of this. Various hazards of nature based tourism to reserve forests and wild life sanctuaries had been pointed out by environmentalists:

- **"The collection of flowers, plants by the tourists results in change in species composition.**
- **Careless use of fire in parks often cause major fires.**
- **Deliberate chopping of trees for tent poles and fire wood damage the age structure of plant community.**
- **Overenthusiastic and thoughtless viewing and photography results in the disruption of feeding and breeding patterns of animals.**
- **Development of highways and trails through parks in areas which are traditionally feeding and breeding areas forces wildlife to relocate itself.**
- **The extension of tourism also results in change of wildlife habits.**
- **The capture and killing of animals increases with the growing demand for wild life souvenirs."**[12]

Also, discarded foodwaste with synthetic taste and colouring agents, when consumed by wild species affects their delicate biological and reproductive systems.

In the mad chase for profits, conservation and maintenance rules and regulations occupies no meaning to the authorities. As for the urban tourist, nature is merely a commodity for leisure and pleasure from the maddening urban life. Neither have any concern for the damage they contribute to the nature, wildlife or people.

While the very policy of tourism into wilderness remains debatable, questions like who controls and checks the tourist inflow into forests, what check measures are taken against violation of plant and animal rights, will the forest officials also be liable for penal sanctions along with violators of rules and regulations and what happens to the people and their forest related economic activity are things of grave concern.

Turbulent Coastal scene

There is increasing shift of tourism activities to the pristine coasts of Tamil Nadu unmindful of the coastal environment and community. This region extending the entire length of Tamil Nadu, covering almost 1000 km. is one of the most fertile and water rich agricultural regions.

This coast is already under tremendous pressure with the introduction of aquaculture and shrimpfarms. Agricultural land had been converted to farms and ground water tapped in extensive quantity. This has left the coastal groundwater table depleted and salinated affecting agricultural, drinking water sources. Mangrove forests, streams and other fresh water bodies were also greatly affected. Chemical residue from feed, drugs which had seeped into water table would have far reaching effects on the coastal ecology. In places like whole villages are deserted because of this disastrous industry. It took peoples groups years together to study, analyse and fight against this menace. The recent verdict of Supreme court of India to close all shrimpfarms along the coast is the result of courageous peoples struggle.•

The coast is protected under the Coastal Zone Regulation Act 1991. Under this Act construction activities are prohibited within 500 mts. of high tide line (HTL).

But even in this Act tourism industry enjoys benefits since they are allowed construction activities beyond 200 mts. Even within 200 mts. vegetation and gardens could be set up. Realising the power of tourism lobby and their ability to influence politicians and bureaucrat there is every chance for violation of this law. Constant monitoring by people's groups is the only remedy.

• This historical judgement dt. 11 dec. 1996 in favour of Writ Petition (Civil) No.561 of 1994, is binding to all coastal states and union territories.



ECR - Road to Doom

This highway from Madras to Kanyakumari is a living example for what destruction a highway could bring to the environment and people. The first phase - Madras to Cuddalore - is already complete. This road is funded by Asia Development Bank (ADB) to the tune of Rs. 600 crores. The planning of the road itself was without people's consent and denying the right to information. It had divided villages, destroyed temples and uprooted trees. Peoples groups intervention could only partly save by way of redesigning the road. Builder- politician nexus came openly here by physically attacking representatives of people's groups.

This road is also a testimony of how the much propagated infrastructure development would help the local people. Individuals and industrial houses have bought thousands of acres of land on either side of the East Coast Road in the name of farms, resorts, time shares and golf courses. The sea coast along this road has the major fishing centres of Tamil Nadu. Fishing villages and community land is being privatised for non fishing activities violating all norms set by the Coastal Zone Regulations. By looking at the pace of violations in this region there is little chance of survival of traditional fishing and fishing communities.

End Note

1 Conservation and development of sanctuaries and national parks and biosphere reserve. Note from Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Tamil Nadu dt.14.12.1993
2 TAHR July-September 1994. Vol.V No.3. p.9.
3 Draft wildlife tourism guidelines for India. Ministry of Environment and Forests. 31.3.1994.
4 Gene pool in peril, Usha Rai. The Indian Express.3.1.1994.
5 Action plan for biosphere reserve. Nature and resources. UNESCO. p.6,8,9.
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10 Measures for preserving ecology of the Nilgiris. Dr.Somaraj P. The Hindu. 10.4.1992.
11 Shola conservation education programme. The Nilgiris.1994-95. p.12.
12 Narayan Dutt and Mridula. Management plans for conservation of wild life. International journal of management and tourism. Vol.I. No.2. Octo-Decm 1992. p.211.

Ecologically -Sensitive Spots

The Ministry of Environment and Forests requires listing of ecological sites within 25 km of any proposed major development scheme. Listed below are coastal sites that will be directly or indirectly affected by the ECR:

Covelong	- Tourist Spot
Mamallapuram	- World Heritage Site
Cheyur	- Salt Pans
Yedayanthitta	- Salt Pans
Marakkanam Creek	- Nesting Site for Migratory Birds/Salt Pans
Marakkanam	- Reserved Coastal Evergreen Forest Remain
Kaliveli Tank	- Marshland/Bird Sanctuary
Pudupet	- Sacred Grove, Coastal Evergreen Forest Remain
Bommapalayam	- Canyons
Tiruvakkarai	- Cuddalore Sandstone, Best Fossiliferous Site for Miocene Geological Period in India.
Aryankuppam	- Estuary
Arikamedu	- Archaeological Site
Porto Novo	- Centre for Advanced Studies in Marine Biology
Pichavaram	- Mangroves
Poompuhar	- Archaeological and Historic Site
Tarangambadi	- Historic Site
Talainayar	- Reserved Coastal Evergreen Forest
Point Calimere	- Wildlife Sanctuary
Vedaranyam	- Swamp likely to Floor
Muttupet	- Mangroves
Kaveri Delta, Tanjavur	- Dense Network of Irrigation Canals from Pichavaram Mangroves to point Calimere and Beyond
Vembar	- Coastal Sandy Stretch around Vembar, Freshwater and Saltwater Islands, Best Beach in India, Unique Sand Dunes
Kail	- Ancient Historic Port
Gulf Of Mannar	- Biosphere Reserve

Tourist centre that's a decentralisation model

My travels have brought me once more to Kodaikanal in Tamil Nadu. This time I have come almost directly from China with only a few days in Singapore and Bombay in between. The contrasts are saddening and grim. We hate being compared to other countries because most Indians like to think of ourselves as somehow unique, somehow endowed with problems that nobody else has: too many people, too big and diverse a country, too much poverty, blah, blah, blah. But China is the one country that we cannot deny that there are comparisons with. It is bigger, more populated and in many ways continues to have more problems that we do but the difference is that whereas in China you get the feeling that things are getting better in India, almost wherever you go, you get the feeling that they are getting worse.

Kodaikanal is a good example of how much worse they are getting and a superb example of why this is so. Till ten years ago it was one of those idyllic retreats that the British built to escape the heat of Indian summers. They built themselves little English cottages around a beautiful lake and English clubs,golf courses and other facilities for entertainment. When Raj days rich Indians took over and kept the place pretty much as it was with its lake, American missionary school and Carlton Hotel as virtually its central features. There were not many roads and not much going on except in the schools that slowly mushroomed but the few tourists that did come here remembered it as a place of great beauty and calm, of clean air and long walks.

Then development came. And, this is what it has done to Kodaikanal. Every day thousands of tourists come up in buses from Coimbatore and Madurai. The buses choke the town's tiny bazaar with exhaust fumes and the sound of blaring horns and come in such large numbers that it becomes impossible to even walk in the bazaar. Tourism has become such an important source of income for Kodaikanal that everyone is trying to get into it so that restaurants have sprung up in every nook and cranny and the little souvenir shops dot the promenade around the lake. Along with the tourists have come the so-called developers, real estate sharks who want to build, build, build, breaking all the laws, so that they can make money as fast as they can.

In short, this town of around 50,000 people is in the process of being destroyed by what we like to call development but what is really the worst possible kind of development since it is taking place, as in other parts of India, without even the minimum amount of planning. And, that really is the key to what is going wrong in India and right in China. We have quite simply not planned for the kind of development we want or even thought sufficiently about how that planning can best be implemented.

In China because they planned ahead almost the first thing that they did when they began their economic reforms was to decentralise power right down to the village level. In India because the only planning we have ever known is central planning we have still not even begun to think of decentralisation even though we are technically being ruled at the moment by a conglomerate of regional satraps.

It is in a town like Kodaikanal that you really understand the importance of decentralisation. Let us, for instance, take its haphazard, unplanned, destructive development. The reason why it has happened is because the town is governed mainly by officials who are appointed by the Tamil Nadu government and who are sent up, often kicking and screaming, from the plains. Local people tell me that most of these officials consider Kodaikanal a punishment posting so they leave their families in the plains and head homewards every weekend. The duties they perform for the town can, inevitably, only be of the most perfunctory kind.

Now if, on the other hand, Kodaikanal was being governed by local people who had a feeling for the town they would have ensured that they paid more attention to how development came and how its ill-effects could be curbed. To save the town centre, for instance, all that is required are traffic regulations that would prevent vehicles from going beyond a certain point. To stop the constant blaring of horns there could be similar restrictions and to save the lake there could be strict regulations that prevented hotels from dumping sewage into it. Just these handful of small measures could begin the process of saving Kodaikanal from being turned into a complete dump.

Kodaikanal has a citizens council which is extremely concerned about saving the town and it has often resorted to activism to try and improve the town. There have been cleaning up drives and anti-noise pollution drives but, in the end, their biggest problem is that there is no official they can turn to who would be in a position to really help them. So, all their endeavours have failed including their attempts to restrict the unplanned mushrooming of hotels

that break every building bye-law as they put up their ugly new structures. Tourism has become such a lucrative business here that even Jayalalitha and her friend Sasikala Natarajan have attempted to set up hotel here. In Sasikala's case she virtually seized a property belonging to Kodaikanal international school to try and make her hotel dream come true.

If Kodaikanal had its own powerful local government which controlled even its own police and raised its own taxes none of these things could have happened. There would also have been better infrastructure-roads, hospitals, electricity, schools-because local government has to answer more directly to the people than any other.

Ironically, there are panchayat elections going on at this very moment in Kodaikanal. Vast amounts of money are being spent on cars that screech their messages from the early hours of the morning till late into the night. When I asked a local resident how so much money was being spent on such a minor election I was told that one of the main candidates was a rich and powerful local man who was widely regarded as 'a Mafia type'. "They say he has made huge money out of forest contracts and they say he will win because he has promised all poor people land."

The funny thing is that even a local government headed by a local crook could do more, eventually, for towns like Kodaikanal than some supposedly honest official sitting in distant Madras. The same is true for villages and towns all over the country. Standards of living will only improve when they are ruled by local people even if they are only local crooks.

Tavleen Singh

All-party meet demands scrapping of Master Plan

UDHAGAMANDALAM, June 11 - Scrapping of the Master Plan (new building rules) in toto and ban on toll collection were the two things stressed by most of the speakers at the all-party and non-governmental agencies meeting organised by the district unit of the DMK here today.

P.M. Mubarak, Gudalur MLA and district secretary of the DMK, who presided over the meeting, assured the large gathering that these two demands of the public would be met by the new government as Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi has promised to the people of the district during his visit to Ooty six months ago that if the DMK was voted to power the Master Plan would be scrapped.

Some speakers, however, expressed their opposition to the total withdrawal of the Master Plan. They wanted the rules to be relaxed in such a way that the poor are not affected. They said that relaxing the rules is the need of the hour to restore the pristine glory of the district.

L.Moolchand, president of the Nilgiris Chamber of Commerce and Industry, demanded a total scrapping of the Master Plan and restoration of the old district Municipalities Act. He suggested that in order to meet the firewood shortage and to preserve the ecology and environment of the Nilgiris, electric crematoriums must be set up in Udhagamandalam and Coonoor.

Referring to over-congestion in the existing market complex he suggested setting up of a wholesale grain, vegetable and fruit market with adequate lorry parking facilities at a convenient place at the entrance of Udhagamandalam.

In order to improve hygenic conditions he wanted the authorities to regulate the mushrooming of meat, fish and poultry stalls and suggested sale of meat and fish in the protected stalls in the municipal area.

Bhojan, district president of the BJP, demanded two more government arts and science colleges in Gudalur and Kotagiri block. Explaining the agony of small tea growers, he said that tea factories decline to buy green tea leaves beyond certain limit. Hence three more cooperative tea factories should be set up one each in Thumanatty, Sholur and Kookalthorai villages.

District Janata Dal representatives stayed away from the meeting opposing the invitation extended to non-governmental agencies. However, it sent a letter praising the organisers for holding the meeting. K.Kallan, former MLA and TMC local functionary, regretted that over the past many years the DDC meeting at the collectorate had become a place of tamasha and the DDC meeting should be given a new lease of life by the present MLAs, he requested.

Motilal Kattaria, president of the Nilgiris Civil Rights Protection Association, pointed out that the blanket ban on felling of trees in the district has affected the small farmers.

The harvest of green tea leaves is being adversely affected with the pruning of silver oak trees, which gives shadows to the tea.

Dr. B.R. Kanikkaraj, president of Ex-servicemen Welfare Association, Nilgiris, demanded that the alternate route from Ooty to Coimbatore via Manjoor, Kethai, Welliangadu and

Karamadai would be laid soon as the existing highways is prone to landslide.

He also demanded bifurcation of Ooty and Gudalur taluks with Manjoor and Pandalur as the headquarters for the new taluks.

T.Gundan, Ooty MLA, Mubarak, Gudalur MLA and N. Thangavelu, Coonoor MLA promised to take up all problems of the district with the Chief Minister and get them addressed.

- The Indian Express - 12.06.96

The blues of construction in the Blue Mountains

WHILE many a common man in the Nilgiris district, who had suffered the agony of not being able to construct his house, restrained by the "unilateral" way in which the New Building rules (NBR) of the erst-while Government are now eager to lay the corner stone. Still they too are to be sensitive to a note of caution through the words of Edison Haines. "With every civil right there has to be a corresponding civil obligation." When Ms. Jayalalitha's announcement had come quite out of the blue, it had evoked mixed reactions among various sections of the society in the Nilgiris. Since she had made the announcement while inaugurating the annual floral carnival, at the Government Botanical Gardens here and that too in the presence of the then Union Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mr. Madhavrao Scindia before a large gathering, ostensibly to preserve this ecologically sensitive district and to check the "proliferation of ugly buildings," many people here welcomed it, as a better late than never measure.

However, when the NBR came into force, a Master Plan was drawn up and a move was made to extend the Tamil Nadu District Municipalities (Hill Stations) Amendment Act, 1992 to the entire Nilgiris District, "in total violation of the constitutional and civic rights of the citizens of the Nilgiris," the people were up in arms.

Asserting that the people of the Nilgiris were entitled to exercise their rights guaranteed under the constitution of India, the Nilgiris Citizens Civil Rights Protection Society (NCCRPS), which had come into being almost overnight, out of necessity, felt that the amendments, the NBR, the Master Plan and the Development Control Rules had all been made arbitrarily, infringing upon the rights of the people of the Nilgiris. Claiming that the classification of zones and restrictions in land use had been done without considering the existing ground realities, the Society had pointed out that many plots of land purchased by the native population for construction of buildings had been classified as wooded Agricultural, prohibited etc. Plots which did not have even a single tree had been brought under the classification, "Wooded land areas."

Stating that the parameters of development and the minimum plot extents were humanly impossible to observe and comply with, the Society had pointed out that to insist on a plot of 1000 sq.ft for the construction of residential buildings was something beyond the capacity of even the affluent persons. Describing the demarcation of zones for the economically weaker section as, "highly discriminatory," the Society had pointed out that the constitution of an Architectural and Aesthetic Aspects (AAA) Committee, by the Government to examine building plans was impractical. It has wanted the rights to grant permission be vested with the local authorities, instead of the committee or the Government. Adverting to the ban on building activities being extended to the rural areas, Mr. B. J. Krishnan, President of the Save Nilgiris Campaign (SNC) had observed then that it would cause unimaginable hardship to the villager of the district, who was the last person to pollute the environment.

With the common people being subjected to a great deal of misery, due to the NBR, other organisations like the Nilgiris Builders Forum (NBF) had come into being. Innumerable representations to the Government of the day, had fallen on deaf ears. However, those who 'can' take up anything and those who can take on anybody do indulge in construction activities with impunity.

Opposing the new rules, a mammoth rally headed by Mr. T. Gundan, the present MLA (Udhagamandalam) was organised on August 16th 1993, in which thousands of persons, from all over the district participated, though the then Chief Minister Ms. Jayalalitha, at a public meeting in Coonoor, had promised to look into the issue, nothing tangible had come out of it. During this year's General elections, this local issue had come into sharp focus and apart from Mr. Gundan, others including Mr. S. R. Balasubramaniam, present, MO. Mr. P. M. Mubarak and Mr. N. Thangavelu, present MLAs had promised that, if elected, their first task would be to fight for the scrapping of the NBR.



Incumbent Chief Minister, prior to the elections, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, also gave an assurance to that effect. At the last session of the Tamil Nadu Assembly, Mr. Gundan, had described the amendment as a "black act" and appealed to the Government to frame pragmatic rules practical and implement them without causing any hardship to the common man. Now that the DMK government had announced that the stipulation of a minimum area of twenty four cents for getting building permission here has been removed totally and that a new Master Plan would be prepared with the assistance of experts, and district representatives and that the Government has delegated the powers vested with it under Section 217(D), (E) 217(F) of the District Municipalities Act to the Collector of the Nilgiris, the `wards' of the Blue Mountains have heaved a collective sigh of relief. While the first section relates to grant licence, the second one takes care of the power to cancel or suspend licence and the last one is with regard to the period of licence.

The NBR, which had caused much heart burn, among the people here, over the past four years or so, is the subject of outrage and debate in coffee shops, households, clubs and any other place Mr. B. J. Krishna pointed out, "It is our bitter experience that the administrative bottle-necks in the previous government, had only bred `bureaucratic corruption' at. Members of the Nilgiris Citizens Civil rights Protection Society, while expressing their gratitude to the DMK government, expressed the hope that the people themselves would regulate construction activities for all round benefit. Mr. Philip Mathew, President of the Nilgiris Builders Forum, hoped that the Government would accord representation for its nominees on the proposed committees to be constituted by the Government to prepare a new Master Plan. That is what is eagerly awaited now.

Dr. Radhakrishnan,
The Hindu - 09.11.96

Environmentalists deplore plundering of Nilgiri hills

UDHAGAMANDALAM: The Nilgiris Wild Life and Environment Association has severely criticised the environmental pollution in the Nilgiris.

In its latest news letter, the association has stated that the need of the hour was to create awareness about environment among the people.

Due to various factors affecting the ecology, water has become a scarce commodity in the Nilgiris, which once had plentiful water resources.

Now a days, water has to be brought from Ootacamund to cater to the needs of Ooty.

It said holding capacity of many reservoirs and hydroelectric projects had reduced due to silting. Several tonnes of fertile soil had been washed away, the association lamented.

A look over the Nilgiris plateau would bring shame to the administrators for allowing cultivation on the grass hills in violation of existing laws.

Tribal life is often taken as an example of environmental excellence, but this is not true. The shift-cultivation method adopted by the tribals once has hit the hills, the news letter said.

It pointed out that it was the growth in human population and their subsequent incursion into forest land which has wreaked environmental havoc.

The news letter suggested that children in schools and colleges be made knowledgeable about the eco-disaster and generally about environment by starting local environment clubs, nature clubs etc.

The uncaring attitude of the tourists could be witnessed at the panoramic Doddabetta which is strewn with paper bags and plastic covers.

This only stressed the dire and immediate need to educate the visitors, the news letter said.

Rs 25 lakh sanctioned: Nilgiris Collector P. Sonai told reporters here recently that Rs 25 lakh had been sanctioned under the Hill Area Development Programme to clear the debris and setting right the Breeks School open air stadium. Another Rs 10 lakh had been sanctioned for clearing debris in Gandhi Maidan.

He said both the grounds would be cleared of all debris and wild growth and made suitable for use.

- The Times of India - 09.11.96

Vegetation mapping of Nilgiri biosphere

THE French Institute at Pondicherry has prepared detailed vegetation maps for the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR). The maps, at a scale of 1: 1,00,000 (one centimetre representing one kilometer). show the forests, plantations and other vegetation within the biosphere reserve.

NBR is the first biosphere reserve to be notified in the country. Demarcated in 1986, the reserve covers over 5,200 sq. km of contiguous tracts in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. It stretches up to the Coorg hills in Karnataka and the Palakkad hills in Kerala, in addition to the Nilgiri district of Tamil Nadu.

Speaking to *Business Line*, the Director of the French Institute had prepared four maps for the area, the one covering the northern part was yet to receive the requisite clearance. The three other maps were recently published by the Institute.

The maps use the unique colour coding scheme introduced by the Institute. According to Dr. V. M. Meher-Homji, Director of Research, Department of Ecology, the colour scheme signifies the various bio-climates. While regions with high humidity are indicated by blue and arid regions by brown, red denotes higher temperature and yellow lower temperatures.

The bio-climates in the maps are shown by a mix of these colours. The colour used for the regions on top of the Nilgiri hills is green, where the bio-climate is a combination of cold and humid. The warm and humid tropical evergreen forests on the sides of the mountain block is represented by violet which is a combination of red and blue.

According to Dr. G. Bourgeon, Head of the Department of Ecology, the process of mapping took about five years. The field work was a collaborative effort of Dr. R. Prabhakar of the Centre for Ecological Sciences at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, and Dr. J.P. Pascal, former Director of the French Institute. Satellite images obtained by the French SPOT satellite and published by the National Remote Sensing Agency were used as the base document for the ground truthing exercise.

The French Institute has an on-going project for the mapping of forests of the Western Ghats in South India at a 1: 2,50,000 scale. While three out of the six maps have already been published, the other three are in various stages of production.

Using this colour gradation, the map has also marked out the vegetational pattern at various altitudes. The dense evergreen forests of the Silent Valley have been demarcated into the three altitudinal zones of low elevation (below 750 m altitude), medium elevation (750 m to 1400 m) and high elevation (1400 m to 1800 m). The map also names the main species found in each altitude zone.

Dr. Meher-Homji said that before the development of this colour scheme by a French scientist, Prof. Gaussen. during the Second World War period, all the forests were represented in green and grasslands in yellow. This made it difficult for representation of the various kinds of forests and grasslands.

In each of the altitude zones, the maps mark out the various ecosystems: dense evergreen, semi-evergreen, secondary moist deciduous, shrub savanna, dense thicket and low scattered shrubs as also coffee, tea, cardamom, cinchona, rubber, teak and forest plantations.

Another feature of the maps is the use of circles of different sizes used for villages and towns within the NBR. The circle size indicates the population. According to Dr. B.R. Ramesh of the Department of Ecology, these circles show the scale of human pressure on the forests and other natural vegetation in the region.

S. Gopikrishna Warrier.
- Business Line - 23.07.96

A voice to be heard

R.XAVIER sells T-shirts opposite the Kodaikanal Boat Club. His "shop" is a section of a wall and when it rains, plastic sheets are quickly draped over the garments. It requires a certain amount of speed and initiative.

But this only one part of what Xavier does. In his village of Vattakanal, he wears a different hat. He is an environmental activist, member of an organisation which is becoming well known in this area for its committed work at the local level: the Vattakanal Organisation for Youth, Community and Environment (VOYCE). The glib expression "grassroots work" is widely used, but often applied to esoteric, feel-good look-good projects. Now here is something quite different. Recently, for example, a resident of Vattakanal refused to sell his land to a developer because of its key position in the local watershed. Given the booming real estate prices, this is unheard of. The person is investing in the long term, high-interest gain of a healthy and clean environment, rather than the temporary euphoria of cash-in-hand.

Since its beginning ten years ago. VOYCE, along with other villagers in the locality, has planted over 17,000 trees on private land in Vattakanal; most of them shola species. Sholas are the true forests of our Kodaikanal hills, the Palnis, off-shoot of the Western Ghats. This unique fossil ecosystem grows in the wet folds of the valleys. From the broad, dense canopy to the wide root systems, these trees are designed sponges, ideal for absorbing, conserving and releasing rain water. There is never a water crisis around an intact shola. Full streams flow in the dead of summer. When, however, sholas are cut down to make room for "cash" crops like pine and eucalyptus, it may as well stop raining because water, untrapped, simply disappears down the mountain, causing flood havoc on the plains below.

The devastating effects of high-yield commercial forestry are all too clear in Kodaikanal, as in the rest of India. There is simply not enough water for the growing township and the many satellite resorts. Speculators make money. Their hotels and resorts use up valuable water, and give sewage in return. The lives of local residents becomes more bleak with every passing year, some leave. As the saying goes, when the big fish come, the little fish run away: but many have nowhere to run. Building a local consciousness about environmental priorities is that first step, and this is what VOYCE is doing. Its work is beginning to take root; the father of five young men, started a bakery some years ago. Even though it was a lucrative little business his sons abandoned it because the



firewood needed to work the ovens lay heavy on their conscience. They went about looking for other work. One of them was Xavier, the T-shirt vendor...

Apart from planting trees. VOYCE members are guardians of the Pambar and Vattakanal sholas, which flank the village of Vattakanal. echoing thumps of the axe are anathema to them and many a woodcutter has found himself politely but firmly asked not to cut in the shola. This, and Forest Department's work in fencing parts of the shola, has shown dramatic shola regeneration. Visitors returning after some years are amazed at the shola's revival. With the cattle population down and woodcutters out of the way, young seedlings have a pretty good chance of making it.

It is all very well to stop cutting trees... but how are people to cook their food? The answer was planted by far-thinking British foresters in the early 1800s: wattle, a hardy acacia species which thrives at this elevation. Wattle has been the saviour of the Western Ghats forests. Providing as it does a cheap fuel source. The hundred families living in Vatakkanal now differentiate between shola and wattle, and are more discerning in how they collect. In fact many of them reel off botanical names and information which would put some college professors to shame.

VOYCE's solid support base, the result of years of dedication and selfless work, invites expansion. Future plans include the planting of shola trees in the degraded areas of Pambar shola. Since shola protections a concern of the Forest Department as well,it will definitely have its blessings. Members have also collected donations and acquired a small piece of land for a Cultural and Environment Education Centre. This will house a herbarium (pressed plant collection), an important resource for scientists studying the flora of the Western Ghats. These sholas are a treasure-house of rare plant and animal species, many indigenous to the Palni Hills. People will gather at the Centre in the evenings to dance, sing, discuss, listen: all the things which keep a small community whole, things which are being fractured by television. Perhaps the Centre will also promote some income-generating activity which could support its environmental work. One such commercial project, says a member, T. John, could well be apiculture. The Palni Hills Conservation Council started promoting bee-keeping five years ago. Unfortunately, in the same year, the dreaded Thai Sac Brood disease hit Tamil Nadu and wiped out entire populations. But another exotic species, the Eupatorium weed from South America, may yet pay for its keep. In Assam and Bangladesh, it is being used to make hand-made paper. Perhaps extracts can be produced from plants indigenous to this area. Many of these are already under cultivation in the village, and may one day be exploited on a sustainable basis.

All this and much more about VOYCE's future direction was discussed at its first workshop in July. Enthusiasm bubbled over, blended with a strong pragmatic flavour. Committees were formed and responsibilities divided. A decision was made to send delegates to the International Workshop on Benefit Sharing with Indigenous People in Delhi at the end of August.

Naturally there are some thorns in this rosy picture. The sharpest of these is the chronic lack of funds. Also, a few rascals let the rest of the village down by foraging and poaching wood in the sholas. Tour groups picnic beside Pambar stream and leave behind generous mountains of litter. On weekends, one sees beer bottles, juice cartons, plastic bags and other junk strewn around, much to the joy of crows and dogs. Crows, by the way, are a recent arrival in Kodaikanal, an indication of the unhygienic garbage situation.

It is easy to plant a tree; dig a hole, plonk a seedling in, fill in the earth. But, just as with babies, the hard part comes later. For trees to survive, we must build a safe sociological environment around them. They need the support of local people. Otherwise, prospects are bleak. If the cattle don't get them, the woodcutter will. VOYCE members talk about how trees cannot be planted in isolation, how young trees must have the collective backing of the community. We, its well wishers, can only hope that it will also have the support of the authorities. The common NGO disease is that the government sees them as a threat, an obstacle, an enemy. This is far from the truth, in this case anyway. Both VOYCE and the Forest Department have a common goal and much can be achieved if they work together.

Armchair conservationists like us can also lend a hand. Not (let us be sensible) by getting our hands dirty. It is messy, muddy work, and cracked fingernails and sunstroke are not quite our kind of thing. But what we can do is write a small cheque. It will go a long way. The address: VOYCE, 12/16, Vattakanal, Kodaikanal-624101, S. India.

ZAI WHITAKER

Madras HC clarifies on hotel demolition order

THE Madras High Court has clarified that its order for the demolition of five floors of the Pleasant Stay Hotel building at Kodaikanal, did indeed refer to the five topmost floors.

The order passed on April 10, 1995 by a division bench comprising Mr Justice M Srinivasan and Mr Justice S Jagadeesan had been challenged in the Supreme Court by the hotel's managing director Mr Rakesh Mittal.

The apex body, while upholding the order, however remanded the matter to the high court to clarify as to which five of the seven floors were to be demolished.

The whole matter received wide publicity in the media, with the bench passing strictures against the state chief minister Ms J. Jayalalitha and the local administration minister on a writ petition filed by the Palani Hill Conservation Council.

The bench, in its orders on Saturday, pointed out that the original sanctioned plan was only for the construction of two floors above the natural ground level and not for two floors above road level. The order for demolition referred to the five floors above the ground and first floors, the bench said.

The hotel had contended that the sanction to the building plan referred to the two floors above road level.

- The Economic Times - 30.10.96

Norms to the winds

The case of an errant hotel

The Opposition parties in Tamil Nadu could not have asked for more. The Madras High Court's damning indictment on April 10 of Chief Minister Jayalalitha and Local Administration Minister T. M. Selvaganapathy for "not applying their minds" when they approved the unauthorised construction of a seven storeyed hotel at Kodaikanal has boosted the Opposition's campaign on corruption in high places in the State Government.

For Pleasant Stay Hotel at Kodaikanal the Tamil Nadu Government went to great lengths to relax building rules, passed two orders and amended laws - all to favour a hotelier. The issue was the unauthorised construction of six floors (second to seventh floors) which the Government somehow wanted to legalise but conservationists stoutly opposed. The Government surreptitiously brought in an order on May 13, 1994, which was not even gazetted. Such was the clout enjoyed by the hotel's Managing Director, Rakesh Mittal, with the State Government that it even exempted the hotel from installing fire-fighting devices!

What appalled the Division Bench was the ignorance of a Deputy Secretary to the Government who, in his additional counter-affidavit, claimed that the "Government had passed the Amendment Act", namely the Tamil Nadu District Municipalities (Second Amendment and Validation) Act, 1994. Justice M. Srinivasan and Justice S. Jagadeesan, who handed down the final orders, sarcastically observed: "We have not so far heard of a Government passing an enactment. In our opinion, it is only the legislature which can pass an enactment. Probably, the Deputy Secretary has inadvertently blurted out the truth that it is the Government which has passed the Amendment Act and not the legislature, perhaps in view of the fact that the ruling party has such an absolute majority in the Assembly."

Rakesh Mittal had the temerity to claim before the court that all he had done was to build a "basement" with five floors! The sixth and seventh floors, he claimed, constituted the ground and first floors. Justice J Kanakaraj contemptuously dismissed his claim as a "cock and bull story".

In its final order, the Bench angrily observed that the hotel had attempted to deceive "the court by putting forward false pleas. This is a fit case in which the building should be demolished in view of the flagrant violation of the rules."

The judgment was the culmination of a three-year legal battle waged by the Palani Hills Conservation Council (PHCC), represented by its president, Navroz Mody, and member, Tara Murali.

One of the aspects which stand out in this case is the upright conduct of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) official P.C. Cyriac. As Secretary, Municipal Administration and Water Supply Department, Cyriac stood his ground that he would not legalise the unauthorised construction of the top floors. Retribution was swift. He was transferred and the Government had its way with pliant officials in office.

In April 1991, Rakesh Mittal was granted permission by the Kodaikanal Township for construction of the ground and first floors of the hotel. However, in January 1992, he submitted a revised plan to construct seven floors, which was rejected as violative of the rules.



Mittal appealed against the decision but went ahead with the construction without waiting for an order. It was when he was constructing the shell of the fourth floor that an alert PHCC moved the High Court and obtained a stay. When Mittal went ahead with the construction of the fifth, sixth and seventh floors, the PHCC charged him with committing contempt of court. When the contempt application came up for hearing, he told the court that the first five floors constituted the "basement" because they were situated below the road level and the sixth and seventh Floors constituted the ground and first floors.

When the court compared the photographs of the construction with those taken when the stay was granted, it found definite proof of disobedience of its orders. On march 31, 1994, Justice Kanakaraj fined Mittal Rs. 2,000 and directed him not to use any floor other than the ground and first floors.

Even as Rakesh Mittal appealed against this order, he applied to the Government seeking approval of his revised plan. On May 5, 1994, Selvaganapathy noted that necessary exemption from the rules might be granted and on the same day Jayalalitha countersigned it.

The petitioners and their lawyer were surprised to find that the file had been countersigned by the Chief Minister herself. Not knowing this, they had concentrated their attack of *mala fide* on the Secretary, Municipal Administration and Water Supply Department. Had the petitioners had access to the government files, as the judges had, they might have targeted the Local Administration Minister and the Chief Minister.

Justice Srinivasan and Justice Jagadeesan pointed out that Selvaganapathy treated it as an application for exemption under Section 217 Q of the Tamil Nadu District Municipalities Act. "It is evident from the Minister's order that he had neither applied his mind nor taken into consideration the relevant factors set out in Section 217 Q" which allowed exemption of public buildings belonging to the Central or State Governments, provided they did not mar the scenic beauty of the hill station.

The judges were unsparing of Jayalalitha also. "The Chief Minister has simply signed the file without entering any minute or remark. There is nothing to show that there was application of mind to the matters on record by the Chief Minister," they said.

On May 13, 1994, the Jayalalitha Government surreptitiously brought in a Government Order, Ms. No. 126, granting Rakesh Mittal permission for the construction of the seven floors.

Tara Murali of the PHCC again moved the court to quash this G.O. and sought demolition of the illegal floors. When Sriram Panchu, counsel for the PHCC, wrote to the Government asking for a copy of the G.O., which was not published in the Gazette, the Government was cagey. The Madras Metropolitan Development Authority and the Town and Country Planning Authority, which are responsible for controlling building activities, were also unaware of the G.O. Since the copy of the G.O. was not available, the court declined to number the writ petition. So Sriram Panchu filed another writ petition, asking for a copy of the G.O. Justice D. Raju had no hesitation in declaring that the PHCC should be given a copy of the G.O. The Government finally relented.

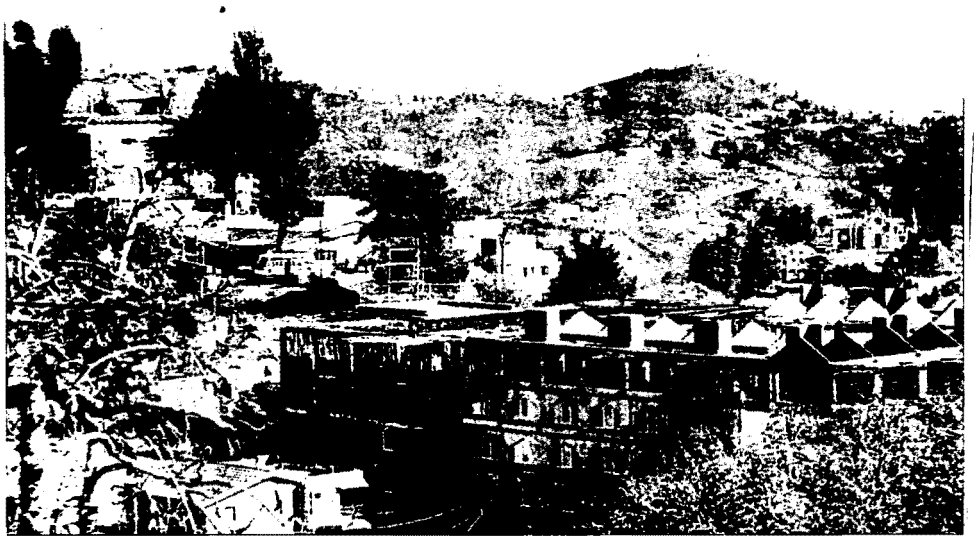
An interesting sidelight was that during the course of the arguments, when R. Krishnamurthy, as Advocate General, defended the G.O., Sriram Panchu objected to it because he had been Rakesh Mittal's advocate. Therefore Krishnamurthy withdrew from the case.

Earlier, on December 9, 1992, the Tamil Nadu District Municipalities Act was amended to introduce a Chapter X-A, with special provisions for hill stations such as Kodaikanal and Udhagamandalam, to prevent the mushroom growth of buildings and to preserve their ecology. It provided for the setting up of an architectural and aesthetics committee, comprising the Chief Secretary, the Director of Town and Country Planning Authority and non-officials. The committee for Kodaikanal had unanimously rejected Rakesh Mittal's proposal to build seven floors.

Cyriac, Secretary, Municipal Administration and Water Supply Department, also declined to issue orders granting permission to Rakesh Mittal. Cyriac reportedly noted in the file that permission should be denied to Rakesh Mittal because he had been held guilty of contempt of court.

An informed source said, "If the Government had listened to this honest officer, it would not have got into such a mess". But a vengeful Government transferred Cyriac and brought in H.M. Pandey, who signed the G.O. of May 13, 1994, legalizing the unauthorised construction of the top five floors in excess of the mandatory limits.

The undue Government favours to the hotel management continued. In December 1994, the Assembly passed the Tamil Nadu District Municipalities (Second Amendment and Validation) Act, 1994, amending Section 217 Q. Under this amended section, the municipalities acquired the power to exempt or relax any rule made under Chapter X of the Act for even private buildings if they did not affect the ecology of the hill station. It was obvious that this amendment was brought in specially to help Pleasant Stay Hotel. It stated that all exemptions or relaxation under the Act would be deemed to have been validly done in accordance with law as if the amendment had been in force



Pleasant Stay Hotel, Kodaikanal. Four completed floors are visible from outside though the owner claimed five were built below ground level and only two came above.

already. This amendment was brought in with retrospective effect from December 1992 when the first amendment Act was passed to introduce Chapter X A.

The Government passed another G.O., Ms. No.317, dated December 6, 1994 exempting the hotel building from the provisions of the Development Control Rules, relating to commercial use zone side setback and floor space index. It had retrospective effect from May 13, 1994, when the earlier Order was passed on the sly. The PHCC challenged the second G.O. as well.

Having completed all the circumvention, the Government came before the court, claiming that it had taken care of all the rules and regulations and therefore the PHCC's petition should be dismissed.

The Division Bench quashed the G.O. of May 13, 1994 and ordered that the building be demolished to the extent to which it was contrary to the plan sanctioned by the Kodaikanal Township on November 1, 1991. It also threw out the G.O. of December 6, 1994, saying, "The impugned G.O. throwing overboard all relevant matters and rules is without doubt illegal and invalid... The G. O. is vitiated by legal *mala fides* inasmuch as it is a result of total failure to consider relevant matters and considerations of irrelevant matter... It is crystal clear that the G.O. has been passed only to get over an inconvenient situation faced by the Government in the course of hearing of these writ petitions."

The Bench pointed a notification issued by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests on January 27, 1994 that all tourist projects, located 1,000 metres above mean sea level and involving an investment of more than Rs. 5 crore, should obtain clearance from the Centre. But Pleasant Stay Hotel received no such clearance.

The judges had no hesitation in declaring that the Government had acted against the public interest and in total disregard to the main objective of the Tamil Nadu District Municipalities Act, which was to preserve the pristine purity of hill nations and conserve their ecological balance.

Why did the Jayalalitha Government and the Chief Minister personally show such an unusual interest in legalizing what was illegal and indefensible? What is the nexus between Mittal's actions and the Chief Minister's conduct? No immediate answers are available to these salient questions.

The Division Bench warned the State Government of the disastrous consequences of neglect of administration. It said, "The Government has exempted the law-breaker from the operation of the law, which would amount to cutting a man to the size of the cot. Of the disastrous consequences, we need not say." They quoted a Tirukkural (ancient Tamil work) couplet meaning: "Behold the king who doth not oversee his administration everyday and remove the irregularities therein; his sovereignty will wear away day by day."

The last word on the protracted legal battle has not been said yet. Selvaganapathy has said that the Government will appeal in the Supreme Court against the judgement.

T.S. Subramanian
- Frontline - 05.05.95



In the name of Zoological Park - Tourism Land Grab and Atrocities

On June 5, 1994 a protest rally against the Coimbatore Zoological Park (CZP) was held adjacent to the Kodungaraipallam (river) that divides the homeland of Irula - the second major Adivasis community in South India, between Coimbatore and Palakkad districts, of Tamilnadu and Kerala states respectively. Under the overcast sky and in the desolate valley of the Anaikatti Hills when the informed minority celebrated the World Environment Day, these Adivasis demanded action against the CZP and others for alleged crimes against Adivasis in the name of environment and wild life.

The assault of 8 year old Adivasi girl 'Pappa' for pulling out the marker flag planted by the Survey department, the illegal demolition and destruction of the houses of Vettai and Maruthan in 1991 when they refused to give up their lands to CZP, the assault of Panikkan, detention and threat meted out to Boddan, Ramaswamy, Rangaswamy and Muthuswamy - the list continues. They were demanding the return of their lands which they say were taken away from them fraudulently. They condemned the Government for coming down to the wishes of CZP.

Coimbatore Zoological Park established in 1986 as a non-government organization by industrialists, financiers and hoteliers intends to establish the first ever private Zoological Park in Thuvaipathy village, 3 kms from Anaikatti in Coimbatore. Falling within the 5600 Square kilometer Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR), the Zoological park is projected to be an interpretation Centre for NBR in about 250 acres of the most modern kind where primarily the flora and fauna of the NBR would be recovered and introduced. Situated 25 kms away from Coimbatore city, this park is to be built up as a tourist Centre with tours conducted to the wild life sanctuaries and National Parks which cover a substantial variety of ecosystems in the peninsula.

With an outlay of Rs.10 crores of which Rs. 3 crores have already been raised from industrial and business houses, CZP has applied for a "planning grant" of US $ 30,000 from the Biodiversity programme of the World Wide Fund for Nature and have registered a proposal of US $ 3,59,150 with the world Community Services of the Rotary International to purchase equipments and other goods.

Headed by G. Rangaswamy, the secretary of CZP (also the Managing Director of Pioneer Mills), this project has another NGO - Zoo Outreach Organisation (Z.O.O.) as its associate with its secretary Ms Sally Walker as the Project Coordinator. Interestingly G. Rangaswamy of CZP is also the Presid.. of Z.O.O. and one finds a large number of the executive members of CZP also in the Managing Committee of Z.O.O. except that Z.O.O. has a number of environmentalists, veterinarians, foresters etc. actively involved. In effect it seems clear that CZP and Z.O.O. are controlled by the same set of people with CZP being more closely held.

Z.O.O has managed to establish itself giving itself a cover as a committed NGO for the welfare of wildlife especially in Zoos. Z.O.O is one of the 12 organisations through which the British Airways' Assisting Nature Conservation Programme operates with its primary concern being captive breeding and tourism. Z.O.O also convened the first regional branch of the Captive Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG) of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. CBSG-India operating through Z.O.O have been holding a large number of International Workshops in different parts of the country. The media earlier this year (India Express, January3,1994 titled "Gene Pool in Peril" by Usha Rai) had exposed that these workshops have been used as a cover where foreign scientists are "believed to have been flown out with blood and semen samples of lions, clouded leopards and lion tailed Macaques in test tubes, submerged in "Nitrogen containers". Incidentally Ms Sally Walker had applied for permission to take out the blood and semen samples of these very species which was rejected by the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

Z.O.O has managed to become a member of the Animal Welfare Board of India with Ms Sally Walker becoming also a member of the Central Zoo Authority of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, created under the Wild Life Protection Act 1972 to oversee the functioning of zoos in the country which attracts sizable number of tourists. With such an elaborate cloak they have been able to demonstrate their clout with the politico-administrative machinery and so far has managed to avoid any action against them for the allegations made by the people, specially the Adivasis.

Wildlife from the tropical region

seldom service in the zoos in the west for long because of changed environment and weather conditions. These zoos are in constant demand of replacements. Global trade in wild life is moreover banned. Clandestine operations to smuggle wild life illegally however continues. Quite often the laws are by passed because of loopholes in the laws. The equation of wild life by a foreigner is prohibited in India but is permissible to a resident. Quite often the resident gets the wildlife and lends it to foreign zoos. The profit margin is enormous. For example, an elephant calf costing Rs.50,000/- earns about Rs.17 lakhs in the West. Another problem with the wildlife of tropical region in the zoos of the West is that the chances of their reproduction is very slender. Consequently, semen and blood samples to test for diseases fetches a huge price. Environmentists and conservationists fear that with ecotourism and wild life tourism becoming a rage with tourists the genetic stock of third world is subject to ruthless plunder. The setting up of the zoological park by CZP has raised the specter of threat to wild life on the one hand to sustain wild life tourism through zoos in the West as well as the rapid spread of wild life tourism in India with its disastrous fall outs here.

Already over 6,00,000 people of which 5,00,000 Adivasis (indigenous People) are displaced by 421 sanctuaries and 75 national parks from among the 135 lakh adivasis who are affected in the name of conservation and protected areas. Tourism projects in and around these areas are further displacing or alienating these people.

The CZP has already "Purchased" 55 acres of land mostly from the Adivasis where the Adivasis allege the use of coercion and fraudulent means. The Peoples Union for Civil Liberties, Tamilnadu carried out a fact finding mission in early August 1994.and confirmed the allegations(their report is yet to be released). In addition, CZP has requested the transfer of government lands, mostly enjoyed by Adivasis for decades measuring around 160 acres. In addition to this the Collector of Coimbatore announced in 1993 that 400 acres of land of which 100 acres belong legally to the adivasis and rest held by the government would be acquired by the government and handed over to the CZP. All these add up to over 600 acres. Once established and with the development of organised tourism (with the Zoological park as the operational centre), the spin-off effect that it will cause by bringing in peripheral interests to the area would be that, more lands of the marginalised will be lost along with the destruction of the local economy.

The project is shrouded in mystery as attempts by public interest groups to get the details of the project have failed under the plea that the details are yet to be worked out. The manner in which CZP has been grabbing land and the use of money and muscle power further confirms the suspicion that the intentions of CZP are evil. There have been attempts to co-opt or suppress opposition to their project. It is feared that very soon the 500 odd Adivasis of Thuvaipathy



would be eased out of the place. The attempts of CZP to couch their project with environment, biodiversity conservation, tribal development etc., in the face of stiff opposition by the people does not dazzle at least those who have faced the wrath of CZP. In a desperate attempt to stifle the local opposition, CZP has been literally doling out money to all and sundry in the village in tens of thousands hoping that such huge amounts would shut the mouths of the victims to suppress the truth from coming out.

FIAN, an international Human Rights organisation has initiated an international campaign against the CZP for its human rights violations in August 1994. A number of organisations in the West connected mostly with Zoos and others like the prestigious JUCN are being mobilized by Sally Walker for CZP to counter allegations against CZP.

*The author is involved in the Human Rights issues linked to that of the Adivasis in South India. Historical details of this issue is available in *Tourism Alternatives Exchange* Issue 3, March 1993, ask EQUATIONS.

C R BIJOY EQUATIONS
ANLetter Vol.3 Issue 2 1995 Jan.

PUCL DEMANDS PROBE INTO LAND ACQUISITION FOR PARK

COIMBATORE - The People's Union for Civil Liberties has demanded a thorough inquiry into the acquisition of Adivasis land in Anaikatti area for the setting up of a zoological park.

A group of wildlife lovers of Coimbatore have proposed to start a zoological park in Anaikatti area on the Coimbatore-Kerala border over an area of 260 acres.

A PUCL fact-finding team which visited Thoovaipathy village recently noted that the proposed park would displace about 90 tribal families.

Thirty five of them have patta lands and it is alleged that they were pressurized to give away their lands for setting up the park.

The remaining families, who have been cultivating Government poromboke land under B. Memo (encroachments) for several decades, were being forcibly evicted from their lands, without any alternative scheme of employment, the team noted.

The five member team, led by Mr. A.A Jawad advocate Madras as convenor included Ms. R. Aruna, research scholar, Mr. M Abu Backer, advocate, Coimbatore; Mr. Selvaraj, social worker of the Nilgiris and Mr. S. Kannayyan, a social worker of Erode.

The team which inquired into the transaction came to the conclusion that although prima facie, the land transaction appears to be legal, in the light of findings arrived at by the team, various questionable methods have been adopted for land acquisition, which calls for a judicial inquiry.

The team demanded that suitable compensation be given to the dispossessed tribals, preferably by allotting ultimate lands.

The PUCL also demanded that B. memo holders of Government poromboke lands be gives regular pattas.

The team maintained that no further land should be leased for the proposed private park, until a licence is obtained from the central zoo authority.

It suggested that all decisions taken by the Government, in respect of the proposed zoological park be made public, inviting public debate on the issues involved.

-The Indian Express - 27.11.94

5

Tourism: The Route To Socio-Cultural Chaos

Tourism is closely linked to the emerging cultural industry. Cultural symbols and artefacts are the major raw materials of this industry. Tourism brochures are spread with cultural symbols and festivals to attract people from abroad. Decontexualised propagation create the image of the 'exotic' to tourists for whom it becomes merely something to be looked upon.

Rituals and expressions originated with specific purposes and the performance itself is sacred. The hour chosen, duration, purpose and preparations of performance is strictly community and ritual specific. But when is comes to tourism, stage managed 'traditional expressions' in hotel rooms and resorts are provided to the convenience of tourists.

Tourism industry eliminates the organic relationship between people, their cultural expressions and reduces them to commodities. Tourism industry is banking on 'fruits of development' which had attenuated common people to a state of despair. This despondency is exploited and people are being taught that their tears also could be sold for their subsistence.

Heritage sites for sale

Tamil language and culture is known to be the oldest. It has taken centuries of human-nature interaction to evolve into one of the most aesthetic and complex form of expression. Tamil culture is rooted in its language. Even today these cultural forms abound with ritualistic values and communitarian ethos, knit people their everyday life and environment in a unique web of relations to facilitate a better humanisation. They are intertwined with the very identity of people and represent a total expression of their life.

Heritage tourism now proposed in Tamil Nadu is a clear case in point. Almost all the cultural symbols preserved by the Tamil people during the last so may centuries are now becoming mere things to be 'looked at' by tourists. The 10th century AD Brahadeeswarar temple of Raja Raja Chola I is declared as World Heritage Monument by UNESCO. Tamil Nadu tourism authorities had decided to have 'Sound and light show' here.[1] What would be the effect of this on a 10 century old structure and delicate work of art is anybody's guess.* The intrinsic value of cultural symbols for the community is overlooked and they are denigrated to the level of showpieces. "Tourism facilitates understanding between cultures" is a myth created to legitimise consumption of cultural symbols by tourists.

*Even use of photo camera flash is prohibited in Ajantha, Ellora caves for fear of damaging the paintings.



Commodifying nature-human relationship

Harvesting time have been occasions when people celebrated the kindness and gift, nature rewarded for their labour. This also have been the time for their self expression and revolt against the tyrant feudal system. And thus the evolution of harvest festivals. Now Tamil Nadu government has appropriated this too in the name of tourism. People's festivals like Pongal is stage managed and packaged for foreign tourists.

There are more than 14 such festivals offered for sale to tourists by Tamil Nadu government and tourism industry: [2]

#	Name of Festival	Occurrence
1	Pongal Harvest Festival	throughout the state
2	Makhám	Kumbakonam
3	Summer Festival	Udhagamandalam & other hill stations
4	Natyanjali	Chidambaram
5	Chithirai Festival	Madurai
6	Saral Festival	Courtallam
7	Mango Festival	Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri
8	Mini Summer Festivals	Kodaikanal, Yercaud, Yelagiri, Kotagiri, Kalvarayan Hills and Cuddalore.
9	Skanda Sashti	Tiruchendur
10	Arudra	Ramanathapuram
11	Ramanavami and Navaratari	Rameswaram
12	Cape Festival	Kanyakumari
13	Tea and Tourism Festival	Coonoor
14	Dance Festival	Mamallapuram

This kind of packaging surely violates the basic cultural rights of Tamil people guaranteed by the Constitution of India and International conventions on cultural rights.

Apathy towards own people

Tourists locations are highly prone to various types of social tensions and may lead to constant chaos. The demand for space and resources are very high in tourist destinations, especially during peak seasons. Udhagamandalam is a classic example. The ratio between tourist and local population during peak seasons, on an average is 4:1 i.e. for every one person there will be four tourists!

Udhagamandalam: Some Basic Statistics

Area (sq. kms.)	Population (1995)	Tourist Arrivals	
		Peak (May 1994)	Annual (1994)
36	1,00,000	4,49,000	15,88,000

Tourism authorities have no concern whatsoever towards people. Even when tourists outnumber the local population the slogan is to attract more and more tourists. Social impact of this disproportion does not stop with mere numbers. The impact of people of alien cultures swarming around every nook and corner throughout the year would definitely give birth to a deculturised generation.

Udhagamandalam authorities are unaware of planning with futuristic sight. The planning for basic amenities like water supply and sewerage is shocking.

Improvement schemes: Plan for water supply*

	Number	Year
Tourist population in the month of May alone	4,49,000	1994 AD
To supply for a Projected population	1,15,000	2011 AD

Sewerage System

Originally designed to serve a population of 10,000.

	Number	Year
Total tourist population	15,88,000	1994 AD
HADP assisted project to serve a Projected population	1,15,000	2011 AD

Nilgiris region is generally short of drinking water during summer months. What will be peoples' share in these kind of 'futuristic planning' is worth guessing. Instead, there are plans for improving infrastructure facilities for tourists in Kodaikkanal for 15 crore rupees.

*Both these statistics are from a survey done by Ms.Miriam Paul, Lecturer at Avinasilingom College for Women, Coimbatore.



There is a proposal seeking special permission to form Kodaikkanal Development Authority.[3]

Tourists as Culture - Vultures

The recent attempts to locate tourism into forests in the name of eco-tourism is highly inadvisable from the point of view of communities who live there. Communities who live in forests are a unique cultural entity. Their relationship with forest and forest related economy determines their existence.

Eco-tourism plans to bank on rituals and festivals of these communities. Their very act of living and every object of their life becomes 'things to be gazed at' through camera eye. Trespass into each others beliefs, morals and ethics and live world are considered to be grievous offences in a civilised society. But when these same 'civilised' intrude into the life styles and privacy of people in tourist centres it becomes merely an act of business and part of the new economic ethics and is legitimised.

Denigrating the live world of communities to the level of commodities for the sightseers is a worst form of human rights violation. Tourists become 'culture-vultures,' always frantically searching for exotic scenes which in reality are part and parcel of the live world of local communities.

End Note

1 Tourism Demand No.50. 1994-95 p.8
2 Tourism Demand No.50.1994-95 p.6 and The Hindu
3 Indian Express dt.18.6.1996.

Festival of South India Planned in London During 1996

British charity organisation to be main sponsor, TN plans to boost roots, golf tourism

In their first ever venture to jointly promote the region abroad, the four southern states and the union Territory of Pondicherry have come together to promote a Festival of South India in London during May-June 1996.

The main sponsor of the event will be a private British charity. The six week-long festival is expected to cost the sponsor anything between 450,000 and a million pounds.

The state governments have decided to chip in by sponsoring specific events. Private sponsorship of various programmes is also being encouraged.

To follow the pattern of the Festival of India held earlier, the south India festival will focus on the region. A separate handlooms and handicraft exhibition and a retrospective on south Indian cinema are also being planned.

By holding the Festival during May - June, the organisers are planning to sell the region to tourists visiting London, besides the local population.

These two months is said to constitute the peak tourist season in London.

Other specific tourism growth programmes that Tamil Nadu is looking to promote include business convention "roots" golf tourism.

To include in the Business visits of corporates a little of tourism the state governments is trying to persuade company officials to include a couple of weekends to their official five-day visit. The preceding and following weekends could then be packaged to include beach resorts, a tour of the ancient temple's, golf or wild life sanctuaries to suit individual preference.

Companies are being told that their officials will find it easier to accept an India assignment if they get to see a little more of the country other than company board rooms and hotels.

Golf tourism is being mainly targeted at the Japanese tourism for whom India is ideally located. "It is perceived to be neither too far nor too close to home'' says a top tourism official. And given the craze for golf and the relatively inexpensive green fees charged here the concept of a holiday with golf as the centre-piece can be very attractive to the Japanese, it is said.

This concept will also be extended to the emerging south east Asian countries.

The region is perceived to be a market with vast potential because of the growing income of its nationals. Not only are they cash rich they generally tend to follow the trend set by the Japanese. Countries identified for the purpose include South Africa the Carribean islands, UK and USA.

Already, Tamil Nadu is witnessing a heavy influx every month of Tamil migrants in South Africa. Such visits are primarily aimed at rediscovering one's "roots" and hence the concept of roots tourism.

Efforts are also on to promote the state as an alternate convention centre which offers exciting leisure opportunities.

The next couple of years is considered an opportune time to hardsell the idea because of the international perception that regular convention centres of Europe and the US have become "stale".

On the Drugs Route

The coastline becomes a transit point for narcotics

Time was when the Tamil Nadu coast was famed for its pearl divers and the Chinese silk that smugglers would bring in from the East. These days, smugglers are once again finding it profitable to work the old routes, but this time to bring in lethal and sinister contraband narcotics.

Some 110 kg of heroin, much of it bound for the coast, was seized in Tamil Nadu last year alone. The largest haul of 66.1 kg came in May last year, the biggest ever seizure in India. The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence intercepted the drug near Salem. Along with 361 kg of opium found hidden in a village in South Puddukottai near Dindigul, the heroin was meant for a coastal village in Tuticorin, from where it was to be taken to Sri Lanka.

Incidentally, a majority of those arrested in drug-related cases are Sri Lankan Tamils. "The turmoil in Sri Lanka has brought a large number of Tamil refugees who have contacts in their country, to Tamil Nadu," says Joginder Singh, director general of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB). "This, as well as the extensive network of smugglers that was already in operation on the coast, has proved handy for the traffickers."

With hundreds of fishing villages and sheltered coves, the Tamil Nadu coast offers the smuggler a choice of landing spots, from Thanjavur to beyond Tuticorin. From here, according to officials in the Customs and the NCB, it is "simple" for a fisherman to take anything up to 25 kg of contraband in a catamaran to Sri Lanka.

It is not just the kilometres of "porous" coastline with its confusing network of villages and backwaters that makes Tamil Nadu



vulnerable to drug trafficking. Over the past four years, the state, with its two international airports at Madras and Tiruchirapalli, and two major seaports at Madras and Tuticorin, has become a transit point for drug traffickers between the northern part of the Indian subcontinent and Sri Lanka.

Though the increase in the price of heroin from Rs. 10 kg per kg to Rs. 15 lakh in Sri Lanka in August could be an indication that the supply from Tamil Nadu may have reduced, the smugglers, according to NCB officials, are finding other ways. "The natural endowments of a coastal terrain have made it very difficult to police the area effectively," say NCB's Singh. "If the amount of heroin seized in Tamil Nadu in 1993 is any indication, this area has emerged as an important trafficking centre."

And policing the area isn't exactly a cakewalk. Although intelligence exists on drug trafficking from the Tamil Nadu coast, there have been no instances of anyone being caught red-handed on the seas.

In June this year, the NCB in Madras arrested Arif Patel, a UK-based NRI, Y.V. Nagaraj, a city industrialist, and five others. This syndicate had used Madras port since early 1992 to ship out 1,250 tonnes of hashish and 4,000 kg of mandrax. Their last consignment - three tonnes of hashish - priced at Rs. 50 crore in the international market, was intercepted at Ashded port in Israel, leading to their arrest here in India.

Anti-narcotics agencies, going by these and other heroin seizures, are working on the theory that since the bomb blasts in Bombay in March last year, the tightened security measures on the west coast have led drug traffcters to the east, especially to Tamil Nadu. Early last year, heroin that was priced at Rs. 50,000 a kg in Pakistan was valued in Colombo at Rs 7-10 lakh a kg. "We are worried Tamil Nadu is being increasingly used as a base to smuggle narcotics to Sri Lanka from where it finds its way to other countries," says Letika Saran, DIG(CID), Tamil Nadu Police.

Significantly, the NCB and other enforcement agencies say there is no evidence to link the trafficking with Tamil militants in Sri Lanka. Though a few Sri Lankans arrested in Europe with heroin and hashish have been found to have links with the LTTE, "none of those arrested here has any contacts with militants", according to P.V.K. Reddy, director of the NCB unit in Madras. That doesn't, however, make the security agencies' work easier: it is physically impossible to keep a check on the thousands of catamarans and country boats that operate from this part of the coast. Or for that matter, to check every freight package loaded into the containers that leave Tamil Nadu's two ports every day.

- India Today - 30.09.96

Inventory of heritage sites on the cards

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests may initiate a country wide exercise to make an inventory of natural heritage sites which merit a palace on the World Natural Heritage List, subject to the approval of the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

The need for such a drill is felt by the Ministry officials for several reasons. Inclusion of an Indian site in the world list was last done in 1988. Since then two of India's proposals have been rejected and one deferred by the IUCN an international non-governmental organisation which advises the World Heritage Committee on selecting natural heritage sites and also reports back on the state of conservation of the listed sites.

Though India is one of the 147 signatories to the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage adopted by the UNESCO, not much activity was undertaken during the past decade. While the IUCN's listing is done on the basis of nominations made by State parties, not only did the Indian Government fail to put forth any fresh proposal, but its officials "suffered from a lack of clarity and understanding of the implications of listing."

Sources in the Ministry told *The Hindu* that the field level managers of listed sites are unaware of their responsibilities and of the opportunities offered by the Convention. Unless they move a proposal citing reasons for inclusion in the world list and explaining how they matched the eligibility criterion, the Union Ministry too would not be in a position to recommend.

Rann of Kutch and the Gir Wildlife Sanctuary in Gujarat had been rejected by the IUCN as they "failed to meet the prescribed requirements" and a decision was deferred on Silent Valley in Kerala in the early 90s.

However, as far as listing of the Silent Valley is concerned, it is learnt that the IUCN has intimated the World Heritage Committee that India should send fresh nominations expanding the area of the proposed site by including the Nilgiris range of biosphere reserve along the Western Ghats. Revision and updating of the old proposal has not yet taken off, sources said.

The network of protected areas in the country at present is known to comprise 80 National Parks and 441 Wildlife Sanctuaries. Of these five National parks - at Manas and Kaziranga (Assam), Nandadevi (Uttar Pradesh), Keoladeo (Rajasthan) and Sunderbans (West Bengal) - have been on the World Natural heritage List since the mid 80s. Listing on the world list broadly implies international prestige and the responsibility of the State in looking after it, therefore, increase.

Also, if the State puts up a proposal for financial or any other technical assistance, the World Heritage Committee is obliged to consider it seriously because the listed property is now of "universal value".

But what came out sharply at the conclusion of a meeting of managers of South Asia's natural heritage sites here over the weekend was the "total lack of understanding of the operational guidelines of the Convention".

The key players of the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO who were in town for the meeting Mr. Robert Milne and Mr. N. Ishwaran are, however, keen on India taking the lead in using the heritage sites to generate more information and training capsules for the staff. The Wildlife Institute at Dehradun has been particularly requested to create a network of working groups and introduce training programmes for field officers and site managers.

While the World Heritage Committee is willing to provide all fund and support to the Institute for starting training courses for the entire South Asian region to make the staff aware of their responsibilities after a site is notified as a world heritage site, the Union Ministry of Environment wants to use the services of the Institute to evaluate the protected areas across the country for making a national inventory. Information will also be sought from Worldwide Fund for Nature in India, which has done a biodiversity conservation assessment for the country.

Though all the proposals emerged at the two day deliberations and are still being discussed, both the World Heritage Committee representatives and the Indian Government officials are optimistic about getting the projects going.

Ministry officials, however, categorically point out that funding "has never been or is a problem" for the world status accorded National Parks. Depending on the size and needs, the Ministry releases Rs. 50 lakhs or more for maintenance, irrespective of whether it is still a national or internationally acknowledged natural heritage site. International assistance, on the other hand, serves as an "incremental funding", sources said.

Though admitting that administrative channels slow down the release of payments occasionally, the sources said "the immediate requirement is for a trained and alert staff and its response to the existing situation."

The Growing Drug Menace

Drug addiction is spreading in all urban centres of the State and the victims are college students and also those who hail from the lower income groups.

Brown sugar, or what is called "smack", a highly adulterated stuff, is the most widely used drug in view of its easy availability and relative cheapness.

Most of the brown sugar supply reaching different destinations in the state is found to be smuggled out from Sri Lanka by powerful drug syndicates through the fishermen on both sides of the Palk Straits.

This is the finding of a survey conducted by a group of social workers who fear that drug trafficking has begun taking deep roots in Chennai and other major cities such as Coimbatore, Tiruchi and Madurai, what with a vast underground network of procurement and marketing of the contraband.

The general perception that drug addiction is confined to the affluent youth is no longer valid considering the vicious grip that the evil has over vulnerable sections such as fishermen and casual workers.

It is found that the youth across all economic barriers have developed an addiction craze for the drugs owing to psychological, emotional and inquisitive factors apart from a mix of curiosity, personal and family problems.

A significant aspect is that the number of those hooked on to drug is on the increase, particularly in the congested slums dotting along Poyapuram and Kasimedu areas in North Chennai, abutting the sea shore. A sizable quantity of the contraband that lands in Kasimedu is divided among a large number of local dealers who in turn ensure the delivery at the usual points through a network of peddlers.

Slum women are also found to be engaged in drug pushing. Many among them undertake the task of processing and packaging the brown sugar that reaches them through local dealers and sell it to their regular clientele who frequent their huts.

Through inquiries the social workers found that some women

students also have fallen a prey to addiction and the pushers were seen selling "smack" in front of a women's college. A significant locale is the joint right in the heart of the city- Marina - where the addicts position themselves at a particular point to be identified by the sellers.

The transaction is on a high scale particularly on Sundays. It is such a foolproof arrangement by which the seller and the seeker alone could identify each other without arousing any suspicion from other beach travelers crowding the promenade and the seafront.

The survey has found the prevalence of "ganja" smoking in the rural areas, particularly those abutting the coastal belt, among the middle and lower middle classes. The coastal districts of the State are used as hinterland by the drug traffickers for the transport of the smuggled contraband. Since the 1000 km long coast is dotted with fishing villages, it is difficult to keep a close watch on the smuggling activities of fishermen once they reach out to the open sea.

What is forgotten is that behind the periodic seizures of drugs by the Narcotics Control Bureau lies the stark fact that for every Kilogram of narcotics seized, many times that quantity goes undetected, thanks to the "political clout" the powerful drug syndicates have with the law enforcers.

The origin of brown sugar and other derivatives in the State is painfully traced to the early 1980s when ethnic clashes broke out in Sri Lanka, triggering large-scale influx of refugees into Tamil Nadu. Some of them found the trading in drugs a highly profitable venture.

Tamil Nadu too has the distinction of being the only State where drug traffickers, mostly Sri Lankan Tamils, arrested under the NDPS Act, were let off on bail. Of the 88 arrested in the last ten years, 53 were granted bail, six convicted and seven acquitted.

It is acknowledged that coming to firm grips with the twin problems of trafficking and drug abuse is not going to be easy and hence there should be a right mix of punitive and rehabilitative measures to wean away the victims. There is also a perception that cutting off the supply lines could also force an addict to go after harmful alternatives.

The effort must be not only to wean away those hooked to the habit but also prevent others from falling a prey to the evil. In this educative- rehabilitative arena, the survey has suggested, the drug enforcement agencies of the Centre and the State could enlist the help of NGOs and social welfare organisations willing to accept the gauntlet.

The Hindu, 3/3/97

6

Economics Of Tourism: Truths And Myths

Tourism is projected by Government of Tamil Nadu as an ultimate solution to underdevelopment in the state. The same rhetoric is widely in circulation in the neighbouring states too.

"The turnover for the year 1993-94 is estimated at Rs.1500 lakhs representing a growth of 13% over the turnover of Rs.1328.44 lakhs recorded during 1992-93. The gross profit for year 1993-94 was anticipated at Rs. 138.18 lakhs."1

The myths of huge ploughback of tourism earnings shatters like a card castle when we look at the above figures more closely. The ratio of earnings per tourist is less than Rs.1.00 in 1993-94. Tourists Arrivals- Domestic:138+ Foreign:4.41 =142.41 lakhs; Anticipated Gross Profit Rs.138.18 Lakhs; Ratio of earnings: 142.41:138.18; Earnings per tourist: 97 paise! The above figures reveals the 'profit game' inherent in tourism development in Tamil Nadu. A large chunk of the 'benefits' of tourism flows into the pockets of a few private enterprises and the State exchequer gets only a pittance. (The hotel and transport business in tourism destinations is a highly concentrated activity with 20-50 business enterprises spread all over India accounts for more than 80% of total income derived from such activities) The issue becomes more anti-people when we consider the subsidies and infrastructure investments made out of public money. In fact, tourism in Tamil Nadu has become an activity for making huge profits by a few private profit sharks at the expense of tax contributions of the people.

If we add on the socio-cultural costs due to displacement of people from tourist localities, problems of access to resources by local people, various ecological costs and inflationary pressures, the net result will be net loss to the exchequer! We should remember that such a loss is caused to provide facilities to a class of people who are rich enough to go to places and is suffered by the huge mass of people who are deprived of basic survival in the name of development and macroeconomic progress.

Statistical Gimmicks

"Tourism, a fast growing industry (sic) plays a vital role in the country's economy. Tamil Nadu state is a major tourist destination and accounts for an average of 30% of the foreign tourists visiting India.... While the year 1991 registered the arrival of 3.30 lakhs foreign tourists, 1992 showed a phenomenal growth of 25.3% over the previous year is (sic) 4.03 lakhs. The year 1993 has registered an arrival of 4.41 lakhs foreign tourists thus registering an increase of 9.3% over last year. 138 lakhs domestic tourists visited Tamil Nadu during 1993 as against 131 lakhs during 1992 thus registering an increase of 5.9%."2



Since there is no authentic records or convincing parameters to scrutinise, this statistical gimmick could be extended to any level. The Government depends mainly on Travel agency sources, hotel registers and tourist office as source of these figures. Knowing the way our system functions one could imagine how authentic these figures could be.

It is depending on these figures the Central and State Governments plans for infrastructure investments. The justification for every economic development is that it should raise the standard of living of the people, and the fruits of development should reach the entire people. But the profit figures of tourism industry conceal the truth of who is benefited the most and who is the loser. The national, multi-national and corporate sector dominate almost the entire of tourism infrastructure requirements.

Even the local bodies do not get the benefit of a simple economic activity like toll collection. A specific case in point is the vehicular toll collection in Kodaikanal. The toll is auctioned by the local authority to a private party for Rs.53 lakh for one year (1994-95). No one knows the actual amount collected by the private operator. A reasonable estimate puts the figure at double the auction amount. The local authority claims that the amount collected by auction is used for roads. One wonders what will be the trickling down of this spending because roads are least productive in relation to income and employment generation of the local people.

While talking about profits, the authorities also conceal the multiplier effects like rehabilitation of the people affected by tourism development, the loss and shift of economic activity, pollution of natural resources like sea and other water bodies, and cost involved in making it reusable, destruction of forests and afforestation costs involved etc.. Only by adding these costs to the much propagated 'tourism profits' would we realise the gravity of the loss and loot on our lives and economy.

Pulicat lake is earmarked for watersport according to the Tamil Nadu Tourism Minister. But this lake is the source of livelihood to 40,000 fisher and peasant community. The traditional resource management system known as the 'Padu' in which the nine villages have the right to fish in a particular area, has led to the conservation of resources in the lake. But unmindful developmental activities like construction of road, aquaculture, trawling in the close coast line and deforestation has already had its negative impact on the lake and the fish population. Already 11 species of fish have disappeared and another 9 are fast vanishing.* While absolutely no effort is taken to restore the lake to its previous capacity, tourism minister now allots funds for the purchase of boats for water tourism into this lake! The responsibility and commitment of the elected representatives towards people !

*The source of this data is from the case study: Environment, vanishing and disappeared species of Pulicat Lake, by Kevin, Arivashagan and Sanjay.

The New Economic Order

The naked destructive colonial plunder has given way to more subtler and systematic plunder. The colonial period protected the feudal forces and obstructed industrial growth in colonies. But in the neo-colonial era this strategy is discarded since the economic backwardness of people is against the economic interest of neo-colonialists. By programmed and monitored development of these regions, the purchasing power of people is enhanced, so that they could be the market for consumer products.

This astronomical arithmetic gimmicking is necessary to betray the people. It justifies the claims for mammoth funds in the name of tourism industry and the flow of various aids and loans, in the overall plan for 'develop and loot'. Other nations and time had proved that these economic aid would contribute nothing to the receiving nation's economy. Only the debt trap awaits the people and nation, while the greedy politicians' foreign bank accounts swells.*

By exposing the entire state for tourism the fate of Tamil Nadu and her people are at stake.

* With hardly five years of liberalisation policy the black money and kick backs our political leaders enmassed is daily news and vouches this statement. Tamil Nadu's ex-chief minister Ms.Jayalalitha has to answer the High court regarding the Pleasant Stay Home case secret G.O. apart from the land dealings at Kodaikanal and along the East Coast Road.

End Note

1 Tourism Demand No.50. 1994-95 p.14.
2 Ibid. p.1.

Deepening disparity

Behind the rosy development indices

The Tamil Nadu Government has been trumpeting its "impressive performance" in the social sector citing a few indicators: 64 percent literacy, compared to 52 per cent for the country; birth rate of 19 per 1000 population (28); death rate of 8.6 per 1000 (9.8); life expectancy at birth of 61 years (59); and infant mortality rate of 73 per 1000 live births.

While these figures are impressive, the nature of economic and social development, according to some independent studies, has been "exclusionary" - that is, a large section of the population has been left out. These studies attribute the impressive demographic performance to the shrinking of the family size due to a combination of social and economic factors such as "absolute deprivation" (45 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line), increasing "relative deprivation" (the rich becoming richer, and the poor poorer), education-driven awareness and aspirations, and changing social systems such as marriage (increasing practice of dowry and so on).

This argument has a strong basis in the official data. According to the National Sample Survey's consumer expenditure data, the poorest decile accounts for less than four per cent of the total consumer expenditure in the State, while the richest decile spends close to 30 per cent. In urban Tamil Nadu, the poorest decile's per capita consumer expenditure is less than half the amount that corresponds to the poverty line, while the richest decile's is about nine times the average of the poorest decile. Over 60 per cent of the population does not get the recommended minimal nutritional norm of 2,400 kilocalories per capita per day.

That Tamil Nadu's impressive demographic transition has occurred in the absence of any significant social and economic progress is further reflected in a low per capita income (Rs. 4,428, with only six States below it), a high percentage of population below the poverty line (45 per cent, compared to 39 per cent) and its 12th rank (among 17 States) in the Human Development Index (computed on the now-popular United Nations Development Programme's HDI). The ranking indicates low levels of, and poor accessibility to, education, healthcare, housing and nutrition.

But the significant demographic performance has a flip side. Tamil Nadu's population growth is one of the lowest not only because of the low relative birth rates but also because the death rate, though slightly lower than the all India figure, is not low enough. While the State has 75 doctors per lakh population, against the national average of 43, the distribution of hospitals is unfavourable to the rural areas (25 per cent of the total hospital compared to 42 per cent all-India). Though primary health centres (PHCs) extend preventive and curative healthcare to the rural areas, the coverage is still low - one PHC for every 50,000 people. This translates into a higher death rate in the rural areas.

The steep decline in the birth rate - to 18 per 1000 population in 1993 from 23 in 1987 - is also largely due to a shrinking of the family size to meet rising aspirations. With high literacy levels comes a greater awareness of what can be got, but this is not matched by the ability to get them. Hence, the family size is reduced, particularly in the rural areas, to provide better care for the children. Also, changing social practices - the break-down of the practice of consanguinous marriages and the prevalence of dowry - have had an impact. This is one reason for the high incidence of female infanticide in some pockets such as Usilampatti where, with the emergence of the new-rich "waterlords" who capitalise on the demand for water, the accent is on "non-consanguinous" marriages entailing dowry.

There are disparities in the infant mortality rate as well. While it has been declining, it varies from place to place, and is gender-biased. It is 40 per 1000 live births in the urban areas and 67 in the rural areas; even in Madras, the incidence is 70 per cent higher among the slum population.

A high infant mortality rate leads to a lower proportion of population in the 0-14 age-group and a higher proportion in the 15-59 working age-group. No wonder Tamil Nadu's workers-to-population ratio is higher than the country's, as are the numbers of women and child workers. While child labour in the State is put at 5 per cent of the worker population, in areas like Sivakasi it is 41 per cent (79 per cent of them are girls). With a large number of child workers in certain pockets and industries like beedi-rolling in Tirunelveli and North Arcot, and match and fireworks in Sivakasi, the State has the dubious distinction of having the largest concentration of child workers in Asia.

While the share of the workforce across different sectors - primary, secondary and tertiary - has remained stable, it hides the changes within each that have accentuated the disparities. For instance, in the primary, or agriculture, sector the proportion of cultivators has declined over the last two decades by about 20 percentage points; they have become labourers. Similarly, in the secondary sector the proportion of workers in household manufacturing has fallen, indicating a change in status, from that of the self-employed to a wage

worker. This has resulted in high "casualisation" of the labourforce; one-third of the men and two-thirds of the women are casual workers in the urban areas. The proportion is higher in the rural areas.

The unemployment rate is also one of the highest. In the 1980s, the persondays unemployment rate was over 16 per cent for men, and even higher for women. This increased by over 80 per cent through the 1980s. According to the Planning Commission's Expert Committee on Poverty, 45 per cent of Tamil Nadu's population is below the poverty line.

Clearly, the widespread, persisting deprivation and disparity in many pacts of social and economic life, despite specific programmes to combat poverty and inequality, indicate the failure of policy interventions. Tamil Nadu's approach to social security - which comes under the Concurrent List - has been ad-hoc. A number of poverty alleviation programmes have been introduced and steadily enlarged, but many suffer from fund leakages, poor focusing of target groups, insufficient allocation and so on.

The protective entitlements available in the 1980s in Tamil Nadu outside the organised sector were unemployment benefits (Rs. 50 for a maximum of three years for the educated unemployed), disability benefits (doles for the physically handicapped), survivor benefits (Rs. 5000 to the family of deceased persons in hazardous occupations, insurance for the weavers in the cooperative sector and monthly pensions for destitute widows) and old-age pension (for persons over 65).

The oldest and the most significant of these schemes is the old-age pension, introduced in 1962. This was extended to the physically handicapped (in 1975), agricultural labourers (in 1981). Apart from money, the beneficiaries were provided free mid-day meal at government schools, and two pairs of dhotis/saris every year.

In 1986-87, the Centre introduced a limited life insurance scheme, of Rs. 1000, for the earning members of agricultural labour households. In 1989, the State Government introduced a survivor benefit grant of Rs. 2000, to the kin of deceased farmworkers; in 1990 this was raised to Rs. 3000. Over 25 per cent of the poor households were covered in 1990. While the Workmen's Compensation Act provides compensation for injury or death at the workplace, only for those in the organised sector, the Accident Relief Scheme (Rs.5000) introduced in 1977 covered sewerage workers, pesticide sprayers, well-diggers and coconut tree climbers. This was later extended to fishermen, agricultural labourers, small and marginal farmers, village artisans, building and construction workers and truck and autorickshaw drivers. The benefit was raised to Rs. 10000 in 1989.

Since 1989, a grant of Rs. 5000 is being given to poor girls who marry at or after 18 years and who have studied at least up to 8th standard; this helps poor households avoid a debt trap, given the high cost of marriages, and, incidentally, also ensures that the norms of minimum marriageable age and basic education are met. Over 25 per cent of poor households were covered by this scheme in 1990.

An estimated 44 lakh poor households (17 per cent), including 57 per cent of the poor women, were "protected" by these schemes. Unlike antipoverty schemes such as the Integrated Rural Development Programme, which limit the number of beneficiaries owing to budgetary constraints, these State schemes have no ceiling. Assuming there is no overlap, 26 per cent of the 68 million poor households should benefit. According to S. Guhan, then adviser to the Chief Minister, all these schemes, introduced by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam Government in the 1989-90 budget, would have cost the exchequer Rs. 1450 crore, 1.4 per cent of the revenues of the State and Central Governments. But most of the schemes were as short-lived as the Government that introduced them. With elections round the corner, the Centre is all set to adopt these measures for the country as a whole, on the excuse of giving "a human face" to its economic reforms programme.

In mid-1993, an integrated "Dr. J. Jayalalitha 15-point programme" for women and children was introduced. It covered eight areas - maternity and child health, nutrition, family welfare, education, drinking water and sanitation, child labour, girl child and childhood disability. These schemes, it was claimed, were "based on scientific principles". Under the much touted "Puratchi Thalaivi Dr. Jayalalitha Scheme for the Girl Child", announced to end the Scrooge of female infanticide in Salem district, Rs.2000 is invested in the name of the girl child enrolled in the scheme, subject to five eligibility conditions.

First, one of the parents should have been sterilized before 35 years. (Does it mean that parents who get sterilized at, say, 36, are better off?) Second, the parents should have only one or two daughters and no son. (But parents with more than two daughters are bound to face more problems.) Third, the child should be the only daughter or the second of two daughters. (The logic underlying this is not clear.) Fourth, the beneficiary should be less than three at the time of enrolment in the scheme. (The census defines a child as one who is below four years.) Fifth, the beneficiary's family should be below the poverty line. (Though this makes sense, there is a problem in fixing the poverty line at Rs. 6,400 a year for a family. With an average family size of 4.5 and a per capita income of Rs. 167 per month, the official rural per capita income - the poverty line should have been Rs. 9,023).

The invested amount becomes Rs. 20,000 when the beneficiary is 20 years and it will be given to her either for higher studies or marriage; the latter, in a way, promotes the dowry system. It is proposed to set aside Rs.4 crore every year for this scheme, which can cover 20,000 children. But according to official estimates, there are nearly eight lakh girl children in poor households; some 1.6 lakh girl children are born every year in these households of whom 11,000 die; in other words their number increases by 1.5 lakhs every year. So, if all poor female children are to be covered, the Government must set aside Rs. 30 crore every year. The scheme thus seems poorly planned and implemented.

Asha Krishnakumar
- Front Line 06.10.95

TN earns Rs.21 lakhs from tourism

CHENNAL, Nov 7 (UNI) - Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation has earned foreign exchange worth Rs.21 lakh per annum for the last three years through the operation of special package tours for foreign tourists according to tourism minister H. Suresh Rajan.

Addressing a press conference after inaugurating two air conditioned coaches here, he said the corporation, however had been incurring huge losses since the last two year. The loss was Rs. 90 lakh during 1995-96 and Rs.63 lakhs during year 1994-95.

He said the loss was due to huge expenditure over the projected budget. The corporation had earned a profit of Rs.10 lakh till September this year as expenditure levels had been brought down significantly.

The corporation had appointed agents in London to canvass customers for the air-conditioned coaches he said and added that the coaches were operating to full capacity. The operation of these AC coaches was on foreign exchange transaction.

- National Herald - 08.11.96

Exploitative economy

Environment and pollution concerns

A long coastline in the east, a mountain range to the southwest, fertile land irrigated by the Cauvery in the south.... Tamil Nadu's typographical features are as diverse as they can be. And so are its environmental problems.

The most significant of the State's natural endowments is the 1000-km-long coastline, accounting for 17 per cent of the country's total - 355 km on the Bay of bengal, 275 km on the Palk Straits, 315 km on the Gulf of Mannar and 55 km on the Arabian Sea. The Coastal Zone Regulations of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, intended to protect coastal areas, are often treated with scant regard. A case in point is the Asian Development Bank-funded East Coast Road, the construction of which was suspended for about a year following protests against the violation of these norms (*Frontline*, December 6, 1992).

Much of the coastal habitats have been degraded. Though protected as a reserve forest, vast areas of the 225 sq km of mangroves, teaming with life, have been abused to the point of extinction, except Pichavaram in South Arcot district.

Also extensively damaged are the 23 coral islands between Mandapam and Tuticorin, covering 683 hectares, home to a variety of sea animals and weeds. More important, coral has been quarried on a large scale for a calcium carbide factory in Tirunelveli - Kattabomman district. While in the 1960s small quantities used to be collected, in the 1980s over 15,000 tonnes of coral was removed, damaging the reefs extensively. With no reef frame-work left, re-colonisation has become impossible. While the Kochi-based Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) has recommended a total ban on quarrying, illegal mining continues and over 40 per cent of the coral is said to have disappeared.

Also disappearing is sea grass, a table delicacy which commands a premium price abroad, from islands in the Gulf of Mannar, where it was found in abundance. This has been caused mainly by the dumping of wastes which has reduced light penetration, leading to eutrophication and sedimentation.

Pearl bank and chank beds, the priced treasures off Tuticorin in the Gulf of Mannar, are fast depleting owing to industrial pollution and the silt and mud carried by the Tamaraparani river (mainly owing to deforestation).

Ever since the Central Government's Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), spurred by the export-oriented New Economic Policy, identified shrimp farming as a thrust area, aqua-farming has proliferated on over 176 ha, producing 88 tonnes annually.

With the trebling of prices since 1991, there has been a rush into aquaculture, laying waste mangrove forests and lagoons in South Arcot and Nagai Quaid-e-Milleth districts. The National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), which evaluated the State's aquaculture status, has come out with startling revelation on the damage done to agriculture and the coastal ecosystem. According to the NEERI report, the damage to agriculture in value terms far outstrips the income from aquaculture.

Of the over 12,000 industrial units in the State, more than 5000 are on the coast and some 25000 not far away; the major concentration of 1500 is in Madras. These units discharge into the sea such heavy metals as cadmium, copper, lead, mercury, nickel and zinc. No wonder the mortality of fish and aquatic organisms is endemic in many parts of the coast. For instance, Kayalpatnam, south of Tuticorin, has been witness to fish kills since the 1980s.

While the lagoons, which extend up to 3 km into the the coast, remain closed most of the year, they open during the northeast monsoon discharging the polluted water into the sea for just a day or two, but enough to kill thousands of fish and aquatic organisms. The two major chemical works at Sahupuram, near Kayalpatnam, discharging organic compounds, chlorinated hydrocarbons and mercury are the main polluters.

Tamil Nadu's most important river, the Cauvery, has been passing on the pollutants it collects along the course to the sea. The Mettur reservoir, with a capacity of 93.5 tmc ft and which irrigates over 1.2 lakh hectares, is severely affected. One reason is the rapid industrialisation along the Cauvery's course. Industries are concentrated near the Mettur and Bhavani dams. The major towns affected are Mettur, Bhavani, Erode, Sankaridurg, Salem, Pallipalayam, Kumara-palayam, Namakkal, Puliyur and Pugalur. Located on the main river as also on its tributaries - the Noyyal, the Bhavani and the Amravati - these industries include textiles, chemicals, distilleries, paper and sugar.

Discharge from these units are Alkalis, chromium, barium, arsenic and cyanide as sludges and solid waste. Distilleries throw out minerals, colour, acids and sulphate. High quantities of chloride (2,200-7,500 mg/1) are reported in the distillery effluents. Textiles let out alkali, chlorine, peroxide, detergents, dyes, chromium and phenol, all highly toxic and some even carcinogenic.

Also, most towns on the rivers, including the Cauvery, are unsewered. So sullage finds its way directly into the rivers. According to some estimates, the source of 90 per cent of river pollution is sewage. According to Madras Institute of Development Studies Professor Dr. Paul Appaswamy, specializing in the environmental problems of the towns in Tamil Nadu, "Sanitation conditions in most towns are pathetic mainly because of the ancient open drainage systems, which seem perpetually clogged."

The Amaravati has at least four large units discharging waste water into it, while the Noyyal has an equal number of big units and numerous dyeing and bleaching facilities serving the Tirupur hosiery industry. Also badly affected is the Palar, mainly by the 500 tanneries in North Arcot district.

Equally, or more, damaging are the hundreds of small units, whose activities largely escape the scrutiny of the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB). For instance, the dyeing and bleaching units of the textile, hosiery and carpet industries in Bhavani, Kumarapalayam and Pallipalayam discharge effluents directly into the river. The multi-coloured and foul-smelling channels winding their way through Pallipalayam and Kumarapalayam towns tell their own tale.

At the receiving end has been the TNPCB, which is generally accused of not taking stringent action against the polluters. But, says a TNPCB official: "Small units are the main culprits. The Government should stop encouraging polluting units in the small-scale sector as they are invariably unable to adhere to the pollution control measures and it is difficult to take action against them."

As the TNPCB's North Arcot Chief Environmental Engineer K. Kumar says, "The main job of the bureau is issuing permits for setting up units and making regular inspections. But on default the offenders are let off with a small fine. Our hands are tied." This apart, the offenders also have connections in high places making the job more difficult for the TNCB. And, anyway, there is the recourse to court stay orders, as demonstrated by SIV Industries which obtained a stay from the Madras High Court on a closure order of its pulp unit on the Bhavani.

The delecterious effects of such exploitative economic activity and unplanned and haphazard development are most visible in Madras. Its 40-lakh population, growing at 10 per cent a year, generates over 2000 tonnes of garbage and 500 tonnes of debris daily. Much of the sewerage system is of 1890 vintage, while the water mains and drainage system were first installed in 1914. Though the Local Administration Department and the Madras Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (MMWSSB), or Metrowater, claim that the entire metro will soon have an underground sewerage system, according to estimates, even by the end of this year 40 per cent of the city will still remain uncovered.

Apart from the problems of domestic waste, the city's woes are compounded by the discharge by the units in the industrial suburbs of Manali and Ennore in north Madras.

While this has been the fate of the industrialised cities and towns, the growing affluence and corporate culture have taken these problems to the beautiful and clean hills of the Western Ghats. Rampant deforestation and proliferation of hotels and tourist homes without proper effluent treatment facilities have degraded most of the hill towns.

There are other areas of concern. One is the heavy pesticide and fertilizer load: over 8,000 tonnes of fertilizer and 500,000 litres of liquid pesticides are used in the State. Two, while DDT is banned in most countries, it continues to be used in significant quantities (9,224 micrograms/litre) for sanitation purposes. Three, increased radioactive waste from the Madras Atomic Power Station at Kalpakkam: the radioactive waste discharge levels went up significantly from 1985 to 1988.

With environmental degradation affecting the livelihood of lakhs of people, the state has an important role in stopping it. A beginning has been made. For instance, the polluted stretches of the Cauvery - Kumarapalayam, Bhavani, Erode, Tiruchi and Pallipalayam - are to be cleaned under a Rs. 38-crore Central Programme.

The national lake conservation plan is to be extended to Udhagamandalam and Kodaikanal. Common Effluent Treatment Plants are being set up in North Arcot's tannery belt. Units producing hazardous and toxic waste are not to be allowed.

But all this will not suffice. More focused action is the need of the hour.

Asha Krishnakumar
- Frontline - 06.09.95

Jaya chargesheeted in Kodai hotel case

CHENNAI: Former Tamil Nadu chief minister Jayalalitha, and four others were on Saturday chargesheeted by the state Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) in a corruption case relating to the grant of illegal exemption from building and planning rules to "Pleasant Stay" hotel at Kodaikanal in 1994.

The DVAC charged the five Ms. Jayalalitha, the local administration minister in her cabinet T.M. Selvaganapathy, former municipal administration secretary H.M. Pandey, Rakesh Mittal, executive director, "Pleasant Stay (Kodai) Hotel Pvt Ltd", and "Pa'ai" N. Shanmugam, its chairman and managing director with conspiring to confer illegal favours without any public interest on private individuals, and thereby, gain pecuniary advantage.

They were arraigned under Sec. 120 (b) (conspiracy) and Sec.477-a (falsification of accounts) under IPC and Sec. 13 (2) read with Sec. 13(1)(d) of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The final investigation report was filed before the principal session judge A. Ramamoorthy, who is also the special judge under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

However, the DVAC did not provide details of the chargesheet. The grant of exemptions, the main exemption order being passed in May 1994, by the AIADMK regime came under a cloud when a public interest litigation was initiated by the Palni Hills Conservation Council (PHCC), a non-government organization in 1994.

In April 1995, a division bench of the Madras high court, struck down the controversial exemption orders, severely indicting Ms Jayalalitha and Mr Selvaganapathy for total non-application of mind in the matter.

- The Economic Times - 19.01.97

Hotel floors to be demolished

MADRAS- A division bench of the madras High Court has directed that the top five floors of the seven storeyed building of Pleasant Stay Hotel in Kodaikanal be demolished by August 31.

The bench comprising Justice M Srinivasan and Justice jagadeesan also dismissed a writ petition from the hotel management seeking clarification of its earlier judgement.

The bench observed that the interpretation sought to be placed on its earlier judgement by the hotel was wholly unwarranted and erroneous, making it clear that no further time would be granted to the hotel beyond August 31.

The bench asked the hotel to retain only the ground floor and the floor above it. PTI

- The Indian Express

1,500 acres grabbed by Sasikala's family

TIRUNELVEI, Nov. 7: More property tumbles out of the Sasikala family closet. Investigations by the Vigilance Department have revealed that about 1,500 acres were acquired by her nephew, V.N. Sudhagaran, in Chidambaranar district during the AIADMK's 1992-95 rule, Sudhakaran had been the foster son of former Chief Minister J. Jayalalitha who later dumped him unceremoniously.

The land-grabbing - carried out in bits and pieces - is believed to have started in 1992 itself and culminated with a 300-acre farm at Chera Kulam in 1995. In several cases, authorities say, signatures of farmers were forged to acquire land. The properties are allegedly registered in the names of Sudhagaran, his relatives. Sasikala and her sister-in-law, Illavarasi.

One of the former government officials accused of involvement in the encroachment, Shiva, is said to have confessed to the vigilance authorities that he acquired several hundreds of acres for the family under power of attorney. He also said that Sasikala and her family were yet to pay several lakhs of rupees for the purchases.

The Indian Express has now found out that the whole operation was carried out through a front of real estate agents, who were given power of attorney. They,in turn, were allegedly helped by four retired government officials - besides Siva, Pandianesan, Radhakrishnan and Rajendran - who acted on their behalf for the purchases.

The operation worked some-what like this. The agents camped in Tirunelveli during the period and contacted about 20 brokers in the nearby villages to spread the word about the proposed acquisition. Right on their cue, the brokers started pressuring the villagers.

In village Chera Kulam, for example, nominal rates - ranging from Rs 1.000 to Rs 2,000 - were offered to about 500 landowners. (The Market value for an acre in the village during the period was around Rs 20.000.) Even of the offered sum, the farmers say they got only Rs 1,500, the rest going to the brokers as their cut. The authorities have talked to 225 farmers of the area regarding the transactions.

P.K.Prakash
- The Indian Express - 08.11.96

Transferring park case to hotel project

FIR to be filed against Indira kumari

An FIR is to be filed against former Social Welfare Minister in J. Jayalalitha's cabinet, R. Indira Kumari, within 10 days in a new case, for transferring prime land in Coimbatore meant for a children's theme park to a private hotel project.

The then Social Welfare Secretary Kirubakaran and the then Managing Director of Tamil Nadu Women's Development Corporation, Rajamohan, will also be processed against in the same case, official sources told The Indian Express.

The CID (Crime Branch) will file the FIR. A preliminary inquiry had been conducted at the instance of the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) by the CID.

The matter was then referred back to the DVAC to proceed further in the matter. Accordingly, the FIR is being filed, since the transfer of concessional land to the private hotel had resulted in loss of revenue of several crores rupees to the State Government, the sources added.

Land earmarked for a children's Theme Park by the Women's Development Corporation had been diverted to the hotel project.

Exception had been taken to the note put up by Kirubakaran, that development of a hotel would also result in development of women.

Inquiries by the DVAC and the CID have also revealed that some officials have tried to help the private hotel project by suggesting that the concessional land for a children's park could be sold at the same subsidised rate to the hotel management.

The then Finance Secretary Narayanan is believed to have objected to the sale.

He had insisted that even if the land was to be given to a hotel, the cost should be at least five times the rate earmarked for the park.



Thereby, the loss to the Government was vastly reduced by the proposal, although the hotel was still assigned the land on a 30-year-lease at rates lower than the prevailing market rate.

One estimate says the land, considering that the lease was for a long period, should have really been priced far higher and its value should be taken at Rs 56 crore in view of incremental value every three years.

Another estimate places it at a lower figure.

There is a substantive loss to the Government involved in the transaction, and the former minister and the two officers, are being brought under the scope of the case.

"The matter is at a fairly advanced stage", an official said.

Indian Express.

BALAJI GROUP TO INVEST RS 3000-CR ON EXPANSION, DIVERSIFICATON

Our Madras Bureau 15 March

THE Madras-based Balaji group has chalked out plans for investing over Rs 3000 crore in the next four to five years to expand and diversify its interests in distilleries, steel, shipping, cement, power, real estate, hotels, steel, aqua culture and financial services.

The exercise has been launched with a view to raising the group's turnover to Rs 6000 crore within the next five years from the present level of around Rs 700 crore.

According to the officials in the group, the proposals include an investment of Rs 1000 crore in power, Rs 600 crore in steel, Rs 350 crore in hotels, Rs 300 crore in shipping, Rs 150 crore in the Madras Industrial Park and over Rs 500 crore in cement. The resources are to be raised through internal accruals, Euro loans and the capital market, among other things.

The officials told *the Economic Times* that in areas like power, the group had big plans: While it was setting up a 100 mw power plant based on furnace oil at Madurai, it had signed MoUs in Andhra Pradesh for putting up 200 mw plants. The investment in power, therefore, could exceed Rs. 1000 crore.

In addition, fresh investments have been planned in shipping which is emerging as the growth area in general. For one, Balaji Distilleries Ltd. one of the group companies, has already diversified into this area by acquiring two handymax bulk carriers of around 37,000 dead weight tonnage, namely, Balaji Vintage and Balaji Premium. This involved an investment of Rs 100 crores. Further, BDL would be acquiring three more ships involving an outlay of Rs. 150 crore during the current year.

Sources explained that following the signing of the Gatt accord, international trade was expected to witness a phenomenal rise in the cross border trading which augured well for the industry. Accordingly, the group proposes to buy six ships in all in the next year or two. One new area that the group is now pursuing is cement.

Under Balaji Industrial Corporation Ltd (BICL), which is becoming its flagship, the group proposes to acquire a large plant with an existing capacity of over eight lakh tonnes. In this context, it is finalising plans to join hands with one of the leading cement companies in the world. Significantly, it has already made a bid for the TN PSU, Tancem.

To add to its existing strength, the groups is all set to raise steel output to four lakh tonnes by setting up an integrated steel plant. It has engaged M N Dastur to undertake a detailed study for the purpose.

The project would cost Rs. 600 odd crore. "Since we have our own customers, selling the steel should be no problem. Already we have 45 depots spread over different parts of the country, said a senior company official.

Added to all this is the investment that the group is making in hotels, under the aegis of the Balaji Hotels and Enterprises Ltd (BHEL). Under this, it is setting up a five star deluxe hotel in Madras at a prime location in association with the Oberois. Involving an investment of over Rs. 150 crore, the hotel will have 360 rooms.

Similarly, it plans to set up a host of four star hotels in different locations in the country in collaboration with the Oberois. BHEL proposes to tap the capital market for raising a part of the funds required for the five star deluxe hotels though much of the resource required for the hotel would also come from the sale of the commercial space equivalent to 200,000 sq feet in the hotel block.

The four star hotels, also being put up in collaboration with the Oberois group, would be managed by Novotel. These hotels will be part of a chain which BHEL plans to set up in the country.

Further, the group is giving finishing touches to its aqua farm near Nellore covering 100 acres, the largest such farm in the country, company officials maintained. the farm will grow 200 million post larval shrimps and will comprise 150 hectares of water spread area coupled with a plant with a capacity to process 9000 tonnes of shrimp. The 100 per cent EoU involving an investment of Rs 65 crore, has been financed jointly by ICICI, IFCI, IRBI and SBI, New York.

- The Economic Times - 16.03.96

7
Politics Of Tourism Development

The global, national and state level dominance on policies by a minuscule minority who is politically and economically powerful is a general phenomenon. Tourism policies are no exception. The tentacles of this powerful lobby, in fact a form of dominant coalition, has been extended to every nook and corner of the state through tourism policies.

People in the tourism localities are made mere pawns in the profit game played by multinational hotel chains, transnational airline companies, huge transport manufacturers and tour operators. Political patronage for this profit game is available at national, state and local level because domestic rich and powerful are also getting a piece of the cake.

The whole rhetoric about decentralisation is a tool to appease the local elite and to make them part of the global and national power chains thus making them subservient to the expansionist needs of the global and national rich. It is a process of co-opting and containing dissent even in the remote corners.

People of the existing tourism localities and those which are earmarked for tourism have never been consulted before drastically changing the life processes in their areas through tourism. The 'top-down' policy making is based on political exclusion of the people from making their own choices about their life and activities. The mythical democratic structures are used as a means to legitimise these kind of political exclusion.

The people of Yercaud should decide whether they want tourism or some other activity. The representatives who are nesting in New Delhi or Madras who became what they are through arithmetic of elections (obtaining only a small fraction of the total votes) have no right to change life processes through demoniac policies. These policies are churned out according to the profit demands of global agencies and enterprises who have legitimised greed and exploitation as their operational ideology.

Political clout of Development

Political parties in Tamil Nadu have conveniently changed their colour to match the emerging economic order, shedding behind the ideals for which their parent body fought. Both AIADMK and DMK branched from Dravida Kazhakam. DK was a mass movement with a vision on social justice, nationality and socio-cultural issues. But later 'charismatic' leaders hijacked the movement, opiated the people with their celluloid image and rhetoric. The innumerable factions of DK movement today fight in the name of Tamil people. But the fight is only to be in power and be a party in the loot.



The economic liberalisation allows a lot of space to these corrupt politicians to enmass enormous wealth by way of commission and kick-backs from aid and loans that flows into the state in the name of development.* A servile bureaucracy is created for the smooth covert operation. Project upon project, seeking collaboration, aid and loans from multi-nationals and international money lenders like IMF and WB should be understood in this context. Even though these loans are against strict conditionalities, a false feel of autonomy is created among the ruling politicians and bureaucracy, since they enjoy considerable freedom in the allocation and spending of these funds. The uncertainty in retaining power and time span for government in office, hastens the greed to haul as much wealth as possible from as many projects. The basic reason for the mammoth infrastructure oriented projects could be traced to this greed.

This also points to the myth about individuals being corrupt and change in leadership would restore the age old ethics.

At the same time the enormous ill earned wealth and the backing of bureaucracy at beck and call, together with the false autonomy, psychologically elevates the elected representatives in power from realities to fantasies. They metamorphosise into monarchs, empresses and dictators.

The ultimate of this situation is in Tamil Nadu. One of the largest tourist attraction to Tamil Nadu capital Madras is the larger than life image cut-outs, 100 to 150 feet tall, of the Tamil Nadu political leaders.

State, Power and Peoples' Right

In a nation like Indian Union, every economic activity is determined by the Central Government policies. Hence all policies are the representations of the State and the political party in power. Local State Governments implement these policies, irrespective of their political shade or colour. This reveals the fact that they have no difference of opinion in policy matters from that of the Central Government. i.e. They have nothing fundamental of their own to offer, from their economic and cultural and geographical specificity.

So, when the Central Government while introducing the National Action Plan on Tourism (NAPT), states that the earlier economic policies have failed and tourism is the only antidote for the ailing economy, Tamil Nadu Government have no opposition to open up the entire state for tourism. Nor is there any refutations to clarify; why the previous economic system have failed, who formulated the policies and what role do the people of Tamil Nadu have in the failure.

*Former Chief Minister Ms.Jayalalitha and Tourism Minister Mr.Nagoor Meeran are facing curruprtion charges.

The unopposed implementation of policies in the regional states is possible through the monolithic Central - State structure. A vast nation like the Indian Union, with innumerable the nationalities and geographical boundaries, lacks any insight to a federal structure. Hence, implementation of policies overlooks geographical, economic and cultural specificity of individual states and its people. The new tourism policy is a glaring example. The Central Government through this policy mocks the people of Tamil Nadu by asking them to be the 'receivers' of a few tourist in the name of foreign exchange and employment. At the same time it overlooks Tamil Nadu's immense agricultural economy, industrial infrastructure, potential work-force, well founded traditional production and economic activities.

This state structure helps the central ruling class in the unilateral implementation of policies, denying any space for pluralistic interventions. The assumption is that once they are 'democratically' elected to power, they have the mandate to 'act for the whole' and enforce any policies which they deem fit. This self asserted notion to 'act for the whole' should be the very basis of our debate, even if we are to assume that there are no vested interests in these policies. The debate shall originate from the premise, whether any policy with nation-wide consequences, require the approval of people or a general mandate to office bestows the power to a ruling group, the authority.

The relevance of this debate is from the realisation that exploitative and oppressive tourism policies are imposed on people undemocratically. Tourism policies unilaterally declares that tourism is the only economic activity for the inflow of foreign exchange. Tourism policies identifies every hill, dale, seashore, forest and places of worship as potential sites for tourism activities. At the same time these policies refuses to recognise the traditional economic and income generation of people at tourism destinations. That forests, sea and seashore has its own natural and historic functions.

Tourism is not a voluntary activity in a nation like ours. It is planned and imposed on people through policies. Hence people have every right to *differ* from these policies. To *differ* on policies is to decline the state structure and challenge the political system. The vibrancy of people lies in their ability to be a *threat* against any oppressive system.

People in tourism destinations cannot afford to get caught into the debate of various forms of tourism. Nor can they afford to treat each violation at tourism destinations as an aberration. Every undemocratic policy has violence inherent in it. That in turn would perpetuate violence into the society. Struggles without identifying these basic contradictions reduces itself into shadow boxing.

Drafting 'alternative' tourism policies would ultimately end up in 'another' policy making - merely the other side of the coin - creating another power centre. Constant threat of co-option, misuse and abuse by the state and the ultimate betrayal of the cause.



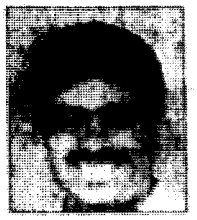
The seeds of alternative lies in the people's *ability to differ* on policies at one level and policy manifestations at tourism destinations at the other. It also lies in the realisation of people in tourism destinations that the ultimate power lies in their hands in decision making, since it is their live worlds that is at stake. It is this process of decision making that determines what kind of tourism a particular people/region should have. Also, whether a particular people/region should have tourism at all.

To *differ* on policy is not alternative policy making. It is to perpetuate and widen the area of dispute and enhance the collective identity of people in dispute.



Larger Than Life

Sycophancy, a flourishing activity in the state's politics, breeds an equally flourishing mini industry in cut-outs of political figures



Nagoor Meeran

(Tourism Minister): Caused a loss of Rs. 2 crore by favouring V.N. Sudhakaran's Super Duper in the purchase of dish antennas for the Tourism Development Hotels.

All the Chief Minister's Men

Jayalalitha is not the only member of her Cabinet to be embroiled in charges of corruption and maladministration. Fourteen of her 27 ministers keep her good company, reports K.M. Thomas

In the true tradition of Tamil Nadu politics, former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J. jayalalitha was given the title of *Puratchi Thalaivi* (revolutionary leader) by the AIADMK a couple of years after MGR's death in 1987.

This was a close relative of the title by which MGR was popularly known *Puratchi Thalaiver*. It is perhaps apt. The corruption charge against her and her ministers are staggering enough to be dubbed almost revolutionary.

Apart from Jayalalitha, 14 of the 27 ministers in her Cabinet have been charged with corruption or maladministration. Three of her Cabinet colleagues are currently in jail. A former minister is absconding. FIRs have been filed against several other former ministers.

The house of Sedapatti S. Muthiah, who was the Tamil Nadu Assembly Speaker during her regime, has been raided and he too is under investigation by the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) for possession of wealth disproportionate to his known sources of income.

So elaborate is the list of corruption charges against the Jayalalitha Cabinet and the Jayalalitha coterie, that discussions on the charges dominated the budge session of the Tamil Nadu Assembly which ended on August 31. The four-member AIADMK legislative group was put on the mat as one minister after another in the Karunanidhi Cabinet vied for space to pull out the skeletons from the ministry cupboards.

Jayalalitha herself topped the list with allegations of having sold Government land for Rs 1.82 crore in May 1992, violating the code of conduct for ministers prohibiting them from buying or selling any immovable property to the Government the value of the property is estimated at Rs 4.43 crore.

The former chief minister is the first accused in the criminal case filed by the DVAC in the granting of licence to the Pleasant Stay Hotel in Kodaikanal, which constructed a seven-storeyed structure, in gross violation of three different sets of building rules.

Even when she was the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, the Supreme Court passed stricture against her for not applying her mind when clearing this particular file. Strangely enough, this excuse has now come handy for her and her counsel has forwarded the argument that she can't be accused of corruption in this case, because even the apex court stated that she had not applied her mind.

Fearing arrest 12 charges, she filed a petition in the High Court, but her application for blanket anticipatory bail was dismissed. There is also a ease against her for receipt of US $3,00,000 in foreign exchange under the immunity scheme.

But outshining even her is Sasikala Natarajan, the video-living with Jayalalitha, is presently languishing in the Madras Central prison as a remand prisoner.

Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi announced in the Assembly on July 6 that Sasikala and *benamis* owned properties at 500 places in Tamil Nadu. The details furnished by him included 18.16 acre at Mahabalipuram, 5.04 acre near Madras, a 9,000 sq. ft. house in Thanjavur, a Rs 80 lakh house nearby in the name of her husband Natarajan, another house worth Rs 25 lakh in the name of one Anbalagan, a house worth Rs 6 lakh at Mannargudi in her name TANSI land and another adjoining piece of land at Guindy, and a building worth Rs 15 lakh at Kodaikanal in her nephew Bhaskaran's name.

Apart from this, some of the known assets acquired by Sasikala's family after jayalalitha came to power are:

- A college building on a 10-acre plot at Sundarakottai in the name of Divakaran, Sasikala's brother.
- A Rs 1-crore air-conditioned wedding hall at Thiruthuraipoondi in memory of Sasikala's parents.
- Vinodagan Memorial Hospital at Thanjavur.
- Semgamala Women's College owned by her brother Divakaran, valued at Rs. 3 crore.
- Ramraj Agro a rice and oil extraction plant worth Rs 5 crore.
- JS Housing Development which purchased the Mylapore house and property for Rs 54 lakh.
- J Jay TV (now defunct).
- Sasikala's family owns a bungalow in Tiruchi in the name of her brother-in-law Vivekanandan and a bungalow in T. Nagar in Madras in the name of her brother Sundaravadanam.

Nemesis, however, caught up with Sasikala because of the TV station, ironically named after J. Jayalalitha. On June 20 this year, Sasikala was arrested for FERA violations. Enforcement Directorate sources say that she was involve in violations amounting to US $680,000 and Singapore $ 136,000.

- The Indian Expree - 04.09.96

TN To Float Global Tender For IT Park

The Tamil Nadu Government has finalised plants to float a global tender within a fortnight to set up an information technology park near Chennai. The tender will call for interested parties to set up and run a technology park on 250 acres of land. The earmarked site is situated a few km outside the city, at Kelambakkam. The nodal government agencies for the project are the Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation (TIDCO) and Electronics corporation of Tamil Nadu (ELCOT).

Though the actual level of investment will be decided on the outcome of the tender, it is expected to run into a couple of hundred crores. The project is scheduled to be completed in three years. The park will offer infrastructure for both hardware and software units, along the lines of the Thiruvananthapuram Technopark. Developed plots as well as built-up space will be offered to companies. Around 3,00,000 square metres of built -up area is being envisaged. Apart from office space and plots, the park will also offer residential accommodation and a commercial area which will include a shopping mall. A golf course may also be built. High speed communication facilities, including 64 kbps links, will be offered.

Apart from the technology park at Chennai, the Government it also finalising the Bharathiar Techno Campus project at Coimbatore which will come up on 100 acres of land on the Bharathiar University campus. This project which has been on the drawing board for more than a year now envisages co-operation between the industry and the university.

Software technology parks are also being planned at Hosur and Tiruchi. The Government is keen to promote software in a big way given the abundance of software engineers graduating from the State.

The information technology park at Kelambakkam is the second information infrastructure project being promoted by the State Government.

— Business Line, 16/2/97



8
Conclusion

This dossier is an attempt to have an overall look into Tamil Nadu and her tourism activities. The general attitude taken, as it is evident, is not to determine the 'micro-macro' in tourism. Nor to get hooked into the debate of its various 'forms'. No emphasis is laid to issues or regions which could be termed as specific case studies. The thrust is to identify and reveal tourism policies and related issues.

Visiting some of Tamil Nadu's major tourism centres, talking to people in the localities, different groups and tourism officials and also going through many documents helped to arrive at the following findings not so much as a conclusion but which may lead to specific studies, discussions and praxis:

Realisations:

⇒ People are the rightful inheritors /owners of the land and resources in tourism localities.

⇒ People, their harmonious interaction and nature together means ecosystems.

⇒ Recognising the historical knowledge of people, their participation in tourism activities would lead to a more holistic and less harmful tourism.

⇒ People in tourism localities have the right to tourism profits.

⇒ The urban concept of private property and the common property concept of tribals and other communities is a reality.

⇒ Many of the 'experts' especially the foreigners do not seem to realise the contradictions between written laws and the implementation.

⇒ Conventional protests and trade union activities seem defunct in tourism 'industry'. Though there is high concentration of capital, investments are segregated, lesser number of employees who are urban, representing the upper strata of the society and educated to cater the tourism industry.

Observations:

⇒ There is a visible shift to locate tourism into the wilderness, what is known as eco-tourism and coastal regions for beach tourism.

⇒ Land from the local people are disappearing at a very fast rate.

⇒ Infrastructural requirements on the periphery land of eco-tourism activity mounts, resulting in reduction or total abandoning of agricultural activity.

⇒ The same is applicable to coastal regions and fishing activity.

⇒ The shifts from agriculture and fishing activities may lead to food dependency.

⇒ The inflow of huge capital and high spending in tourism destinations creates 'artificial inflation zones'.

⇒ Local salaried groups in tourism destinations are not benefited by tourism but on the other hand adversely affected by inflation, increase in land prices and rent.

⇒ Commercialisation of culture and beliefs, de-contextualised performances which would end up the people as ahistorical.

⇒ Tourism Department pressing for single window clearance of tourism projects so as to effectively evade from environmental controls and different departments involved.

⇒ Lack of simplified methodology to study crucial tourism impacts like carrying capacity, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Reports, Tourism economy dynamics etc..



Annexure 1

TOURISM
DEMAND No. 50
POLICY NOTE
1997-98
C
GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU
1997
TOURISM
DEMAND No.50
POLICY NOTE
1997-98

"That is a land that yields increase unsought
That is no land whose gifts with toil are bought"

True to this diction of the immortal Poet Thiruvalluvar, Tamil Nadu is by nature endowed with all resources. Tourists both from abroad and from various parts of our country visit our State in large numbers to see and enjoy hoary art and culture enshrined in our ancient temples, the nature's bounty lavishing in the hills, beaches, wild life sanctuaries and the singing cascades and also to actively participate in aquatic sports.

"The Universe in one - All are out kinsmen", is the historical aphorism etched in the Tamil literature two thousand years age; On the same plan, the World Tourism Organisation has declared "Tourism in the year 1996-97 as a symbol of tolerance and peace".

Tourism is acknowledged as an industry today. The country's economic development is inter-linked with the development of tourism. Tourism helps to earn foreign exchange to a greater extent. It also provides both direct and indirect employment to millions of people. The tourism development policies of the Government are devised on this basis. During the Eighth Five Year Plan period, we planned for an outlay of Rs. 5.25 crores for tourism, whereas, during the same period, we have incurred an expenditure of Rs. 13.74 crores. So this is a matter of great satisfaction that we have spent 2 1/2 times more than what was originally planned for during the Eighth Five Year Plan. In this background, we have to look at the Ninth Plan.

As our approach to the Ninth Five Year Plan, the tourism department of Government of India in their publication have enumerated the following objectives:

1. Infrastructural development
2. Product development and diversification including development of mega tourism resorts.

3. Entrepreneurship development and promotion of employment opportunities.
4. Enhanced tourist facilitation.
5. Human resources development
6. Research and computerisation.
7. Environmental and cultural preservation
8. Provision of incentives.
9. Monitoring and evaluation.
10. Strengthening of organisation.

The Tamil Nadu Government will generally adopt the approach and the objectives set out by Government of India in the tourism sector for the Ninth Plan also.

Tourism in India

The arrival of international tourists in the year 1951 was 16,829 which had increased to 2.12 million in 1995. Indian Tourism mainly consists of domestic tourism. In 1994, the domestic tourists who visited various parts of our country exceeded the 100 million mark while an additional 150 million tourists had travelled without availing of the paid facilities. Next to diamond and garment making, tourism is considered as the third biggest export earning industry. (as far as diamond and garments industry are concerned, it involves imports also). It is estimated that the foreign exchange that India earned through tourism in the year 1995-96 might be around Rs. 9186 crores (2928 million American Dollars).

TOURISM IN TAMIL NADU

Tamil Nadu has been a haven of peace for the tourists from time immemorial. The following statement would indicate the number of tourists who visited Tamil Nadu during the last three years.

Type of Tourists	Years			% Increase in the year 1996
	1994	1995	1996	
	(Number in Lakhs)			
Domestic	160.00	172.00	182.00	6%
Foreign	4.89	5.86	6.14	5%

The Government allocates funds for the development of tourism every year taking into consideration its budget constraints. Besides this, efforts are made to attract private promoters in the field of Tourism. When the private promoters have come forward to invest in tourism projects, they do not get proper land. And for getting facilities like



electricity, drinking water, drainage and sewerage, they have to seek the approval of various departments which result in undue delay for various reasons. The department of tourism has been coordinating with various departments so that clearances are secured by private promoters very quickly.

WORKING GROUP ON NINTH FIVE YEAR PLAN

The Government of Tamil Nadu have nominated a working Group on Tourism for purposes of preparing a comprehensive plan for incorporation in the ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) document. The working group is expected to commence its deliberations and submit their recommendations soon.

TOURISM POLICY OF TAMIL NADU

The Tamilnadu Government has been following consistently a positive role in developing tourism activities in the state. Broadly, the policies followed are the following:-

i. Developing tourist centers depending upon the flow of domestic and foreign tourists.
ii. Priority given for the centres depending upon the carrying capacity of the centre.
iii. For attracting private investment, single window clearance system is adopted for tourism projects.
iv. Tourism pulsate both in national and international media.
v. Integrated development and monitoring.
vi. Tourism Advisory Committees at the State and Districts level.
vii. Development of cultural tourism through festivals.

In order to improve the domestic tourism and to create awareness and to provide information to the public on tourism activities, three new tourist offices have been opened in Dharmapuri, Kodaikanal and Tirnelveli. At present fourteen tourist offices in Tamil Nadu and Tourist Offices in New Delhi, Calcutta, Mumbai and Goa are functioning under the control and supervision of the Tourism Department. This Department is taking steps to open tourist offices in all the districts. In the recently formed Perambalur Thiruvalluvar district, Government have issued orders to open a Tourist Office during the year 1996-97. Sanction of staff to this tourist office is currently under the consideration of Government.

ALLOCATION FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT UNDER HILL AREA DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Under the Hill Area Development Programme the Nilgiris district alone is covered and special allotment is made for developing tourism.

In 1996-97 a sum of Rs. 61.75 lakhs was sanctioned for several schemes including the construction of a hanging bridge across the Ooty Lake.

For the ensuing year 1997-98, the following schemes costing Rs. 80.00 lakhs have been approved.

Sl. No.	Name of the Scheme	Amount (Rs. in lakhs)
1.	Construction of Youth Hostel cum-Restaurant as wayside facilities at Gudalur	15.00
2.	Installation of Computers in the Tourist Information Office at Udhagamandalam	1.50
3.	Provision of Telescope in Doddabettah peak	3.00
4.	Children's amusement facilities at Theppakadu youth hostel in Mudumalai Wild life Sanctuary and for improving parking facilities.	1.50
5.	Tourist pleasure ride ropeway between children's Lake Garden and Boat House at Udhagamandalam	50.00
6.	Special Programme	9.00
	Total	**80.00**

DECENTRALISED DISTRICT PLAN

Under the decentralised district plan the Collectors allot funds to formulate and execute schemes. During the year 1996-97, under this plan, the following Tourism Projects were identified for sanction.

		(Rs. in lakhs)
1.	Provision of Tourist facilities at Gangaikonda Chozhapuram in Perambalur Thiruvalluvar District	5.00
2.	Provision of rest shed, toilets and drinking water at 'Erwadi' in Ramanathapuram District	5.00
3.	Provision of tourist facilities at Sivanmalai in Periyar District	2.00



4.	Provision of tourist facilities at Hogenakkal, Dharmapuri District	4.90
5.	Observation tower at Pillar Rocks at Kodaikanal, Mannar Thirumalai District	5.00
6.	Sewage work, repairing of toilets and provision of road on the northern side of Poompuhar Tourist Complex in Nagai Quaid-E-Milleth District	2.15

The District Collectors have been requested to allot more funds for the development of domestic tourist facilities under this plan.

PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION

1. The Tamil Nadu government has declared tourism as an industry in 1992 and accordingly various concessions and subsidies are offered for tourism projects amusement complexes and also for buying air conditioned coaches. Measures have been taken under the current tourism policy to provide for capital subsidy, sales tax rebate, 50% concession on luxury tax, electricity concessions, etc. for new tourism projects.

2. The Tourism Policy of Tamil Nadu has among other things, been to encourage private sector participation and help them in establishing their projects in the state.

3. The state government considers that it is essential to provide adequate land for the establishment of tourism projects. The Government has also been encouraging the setting up of Hotels in the Private Sector by recommending deserving proposals to the financial institutions for obtaining loan assistance. This will serve as great impetus to the development of Tourism in the State.
4. Since the declaration of Tourism as an Industry in Tamil Nadu, this Department provides capital subsidy for the purchase of generators in cities excluding Chennai, Madurai and Coimbatore Corporations. This has been welcomed by the private sector and as a result, new hotels have come up. In 1996-97 alone, a sum of Rs. 29.87 lakhs has been distributed to six hotels by way of capital and generator subsidy.

5. It is essential that the tourists are provided with adequate accommodation. Therefore, Government encourages private sector to start Hotels by recommending loan applications of deserving entrepreneurs.

PUBLICITY

The Department of Tourism published a directory of hotels containing detailed information about hotel accommodation in the State.

If Tamil Nadu is to be projected as a tourist destination, it is essential to organise an integrated publicity campaign bringing together all the publicity media. The special features on Tamil Nadu tourism as well as the festivals of Tamil Nadu are brought out in printed brochures both in black and white and in colour transparencies. These are printed both in India and abroad. They are also published in the tourism related journals and dailies, which attract both domestic and foreign tourists in a great measure. The special tourist features abounding in Tamil Nadu, the festivals as well as various facilities are printed in colour in the form of posters, maps, etc. and distributed through the Tourist Offices, Tourist Information Centres, Government of India Tourist Offices in India and abroad and through Air India Offices.

In the process of publicity, information is disseminated by organising seminars, discussions, and debates on tourism. The Pacific Asia Travel Association, Indian Association of Tour Operators and Indian Tourist Organisation serve as potential outlets for the propagation of salient features and facilities of tourism offered by the department. Publicity compaigns are also held in all towns in which travel agents and journalists are invited and direct information about Tamil nadu is conveyed. This helps domestic tourists to be attracted to Tamil Nadu in large numbers.

Last year, publicity promotion campaigns were organised in Agra, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Goa, etc.

It is also proposed to spread information about tourism through internet in this computer era.

TAMIL NADU TOURIST FESTIVALS

Music, Dance and Drama form an integral part of the Tamil society. Bharathanatyam has been in existence for centuries together with all its verve and colour. In order to promote cultural tourism in Tamil Nadu, the following festivals are organised.

1. Dance festival at Mamallapuram
2. Summer festival at Udhagamandalam and in other hill stations.
3. Tea and Tourism festival at Udhagamandalam
4. Natyanjali festival at Chidambaram.
5. Chithirai festival at Madurai.
6. Pongal festival at important tourist centres of India.
7. Mango festival at Krishnagiri.
8. Saral festival at Courtallam.

Out of the range of festivals organised by the department, the first five festivals are celebrated with the financial assistance of the Government of India. In addition to these festivals, this Department also participates in the Thiyagaraja Music Festival in Thiruvaiyaru and the "Cape Festival" at Kanniyakumari.



TOURISM REGULATION ACT

In order to regulate and develop tourism in the state, it is proposed to enact suitable legislation. This will also help protect the interest and safety of Tourists. This would also enable preventing the tourist lodge operators, travel agents, guides and dealers in handicraft goods from committing any act detrimental to tourism. The Government has under its consideration a piece of legislation on similar lines as already enacted by States like Himachal Pradesh, Jammu-Kashmir, Goa, etc.

FOOD CRAFT INSTITUTE - HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

The Food Craft Institute at Thuvakudy on the Trichy-Thanjavur Highway has been functioning under the Department of Tourism. As a self financing institution, it offers 3 year Diploma Course since 1994-95. It offers 3 year diploma in Hotel Management and Catering Technology. In addition, one year full time certificate courses are also offered in the following disciplines:-

(i) Hotel Reception, Book keeping and House keeping.
(ii) Restaurant and Counter Service
(iii) Bakery and Confectionery
(iv) Food production
(v) Housekeeping.

This Institute receives recurring grant every year from the state government. This year also, the institute will get a grant of Rs. 12.00 Lakhs.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ASSISTED SCHEMES

A. Schemes under implementation

		(Rs. in lakhs)
1.	Wayside facilities, Sriperumbudur: (2 rooms with restaurant)	22.16
2.	Tourist Lodge, Virudunagar (10 rooms with restaurant)	28.78
3.	Tourist Complex, Salem (20 rooms with restaurant and Tourist Office)	38.00
4.	Tourist Lodge, Namakkal (16 rooms with restaurant)	23.25

5.	Tourist Lodge, Courtallam (14 rooms with restaurant)	40.00
6.	Expansion of Tourist Complex, Krishnagiri (14 rooms with Conference Hall)	17.00
7.	Tourist Complex, Tirunelveli (14 rooms with restaurant and Tourist Office)	47.00
8.	Tourist Lodge, Pudukkottai (9 rooms with restaurant)	19.00
9.	Yatriniwas at Rameswaram (15 rooms)	44.78

B. Schemes which will be commenced during 1997-98.

		(Rs. in lakhs)
1.	Tourist Cottages at Kodaikanal (8 rooms)	30.40
2.	Yatriniwas at Samayapuram / Srirangam (12 rooms with restaurant)	46.00
3.	Tourist Reception Centre, Tranquebar (4 rooms)	29.49
4.	Tourist Lodge, Villupuram (8 rooms with restaurant)	18.78
5.	Tourist Reception Centre, Thanjavur (8 rooms and Tourist Office)	13.00
6.	Yatriniwas, Thiruvannamalai (9 rooms with restaurant)	39.10
7.	Tourist Complex at Kanchipuram (6 rooms)	24.60
8.	Cottages at Yercaud Hill station (6 rooms)	26.28
9.	Beach Cottages at Tiruchendur (8 rooms)	26.28
10.	Tourist Complex at House (6 rooms)	25.73
11.	Tourist Complex at Vedanthangal (6 rooms)	25.36
12.	Purchase of Boats for Ooty Lake	8.30



The Government of India have sanctioned the following tourism promotion schemes during the year 1996-97.

Sl. No.	Name of the Scheme	Amount (Rs in lakhs)
1.	Wayside facilities, Vattakkottai.	20.00
2.	Wayside facilities, Perambalur.	20.00
3.	Wayside facilities, Kodai Road.	20.00
4.	Wayside facilities, Thiruthani.	20.00
5.	View Tower, Kanniyakumari	30.00
6.	Tourist facilities at Vellore Fort	40.00
7.	Tourist facilities at Poompuhar Tourist complex	30.00
8.	Purchase of Tourist Coaches	20.30
	Total	**200.30**

Efforts will be taken to get funds for more projects during 1997-98.

DISTRICT EXCURSION CENTRE

District excursion centre scheme has been implemented by the Government with a view to creating tourism awareness among the people and to make them more travel conscious. Under this scheme two or three places of tourist importance are identified in each district and basic amenities like drinking water, toilets, dress changing cubicles and electric lights are provided. From 1983-84 to 1995-96 a sum of Rs. 67.50 lakhs has been spent for the promotion of 18 district excursion centres.

POOMPUHAR TOURIST COMPLEX

Poompuhar is the mirror reflecting the civilisation of the ancient Tamils, their marine trade, their hoary history and glory. It also depicts the height of Tamil culture. The seven storied Art Gallery, Ilanji Mandram, Pavai Mandram and Nedungal Mandram in Poompuhar are the replicas of the exquisite sculpture the Tamils can proudly boast of.

The following works have been started for a sum of Rs. 62.00 lakhs for the improvement of Poompuhar Tourist Complex.

1. Repairing and repainting of Art Galary, Kotrapandal and Tourist Lodge.
2. Improvement of Graden.
3. Providing New Electric Transformer
4. Floodlighting of Monuments.

5. Repairing of Sanku Cottage and providing of Air conditioners to the cottages.
6. Repairing of Circular Road, Beach Road and providing small culverts and cement road.
7. Repairing of pipe line and water supply facilities.
8. Construction of compound wall around Nedungal Mandram and construction of toilets
9. Purchase of generator and construction of generator room.
10. Repairing of Tourist Office and Quarters.
11. Construction of quarters for gardeners and watchmen.
12. Printing of posters and folders.
13. Construction of rubble mound sea-erosion wall around Ilanji Mandram.

VEERAPANDIA KATTABOMMAN MEMORIAL FORT, PANCHALANKURICHI

The Memorial for the first freedom fighter Veerapandiya Kattabomman who bravely challenged the British regime, constructed in 1974 at Panchalankurichi is maintained by the Tourism Department. Though the old Fort had been demolished during the British rule, some remnants including the ancient Devi Jakkammal Temple are under the supervision of the Archaeological Department. The Fort is now being renovated at a cost of Rs. 24.00 Lakhs and the following reorganisation works are under progress.

1. Water supply arrangement.
2. Landscaping and providing Children's Park along with play materials.
3. Provision of toilets.
4. Construction of ticket counter.
5. Barbed wire fencing.
6. Repairing and repainting of 6 ornamental arches.
7. Repairing of Rest House with car parking facilities.
8. Other maintenance works.
9. Printing of posters and folders.

FOLLOWING WORKS SANCTIONED UNDER STATE FUNDS ARE UNDER PROGRESS:

(Rs. in lakhs)

1.	Providing infrastructural facilities like pedestrian walkway, public convenience, watch tower, etc., at Hogenakkal.	10.50
2.	Construction of rest house, toilets and provision of lighting at Veedur Dam.	7.00
3.	Development of Boat House at Courtallam	10.00
4.	Tourist facilities at Mukkombu	10.00



PART II SCHEMES FOR 1997-98

It is proposed to implement the following schemes under Part II.

Sl. No.	Name of the Scheme	Amount (Rs in lakhs)
1.	Opening of Tourist Information Centre at Bangalore	3.39
2.	Opening of Tourist Information Centre at Hyderabad	3.39
3.	Opening of Tourist Information Centre at Trivandrum Airport	3.39

TAMIL NADU TOURISM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED

Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation Limited was incorporated during 1971 with the blessings of the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. It was started with the objectives of promoting tourist places of interest. Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation made a modest beginning by taking over 5 Tourist Bungalows and operated two coaches. It has made rapid strides since then and it has earned the proud distinction of owning a chain of hotels numbering 33. Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation has at present established the following amenities.

1.	Hotels	33
2.	Youth Hostels (intended for budget Tourists)	8
3.	Boat Houses	7
4.	Restaurants	3
5.	Telescope House	4
6.	Mobile Restaurant	2
7.	Snack Bar	2
8.	Garden	3
9.	Tourist Service Centre (Petrol bunk)	1

The Youth Hostels have been established mainly with the objectives of promoting low budget tourism wherein dormitory accommodation is provided to the tourists at a very nominal rate.

STEPS TAKEN DURING THE YEAR 1996-97

1. The Transport Division has been facing a lot of difficulties, operating with old worn out coaches in the past few years. Steps have been taken to replace 10 old and worn out

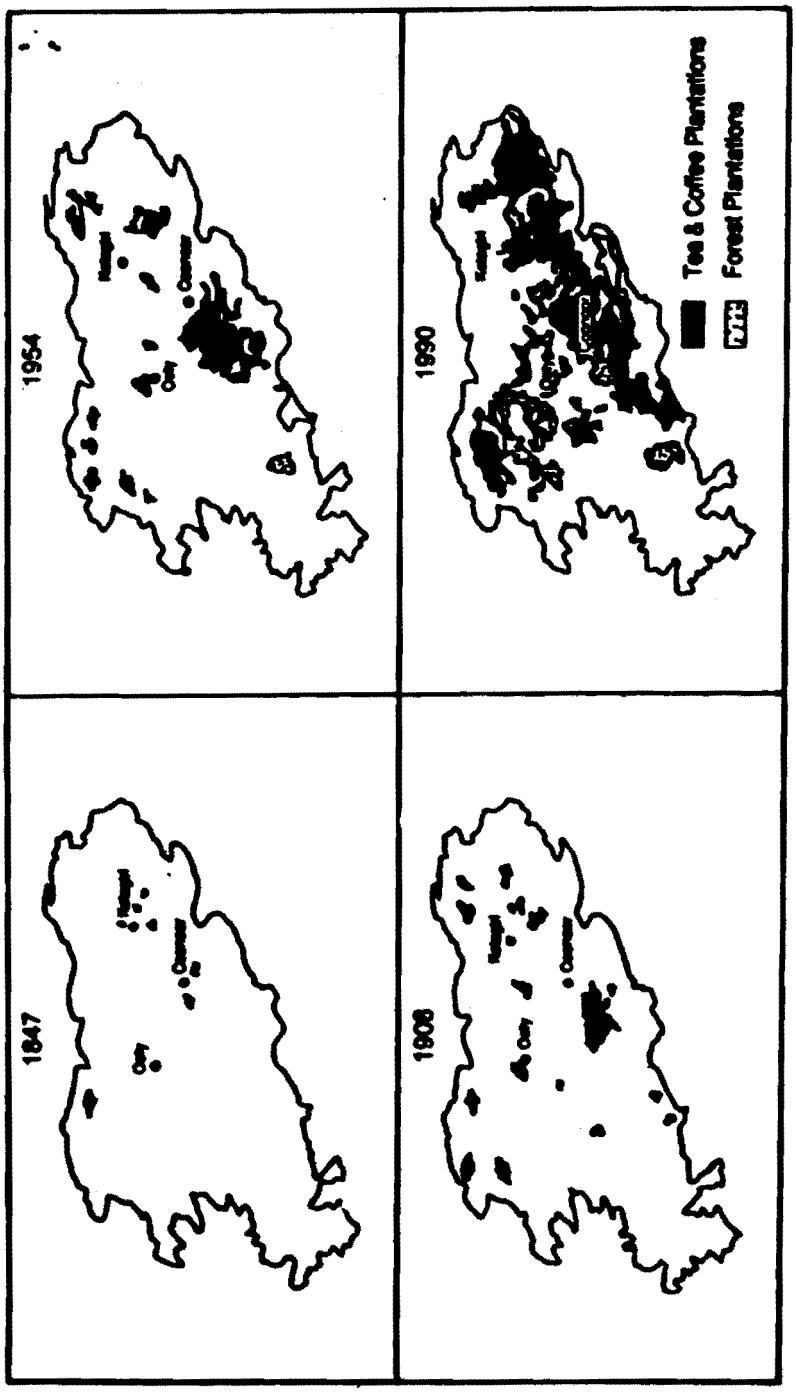
virgin soils in the area, under the micro-climate provided by natural forest vegetation. Tea and coffee estates expanded during this period from 18.75 km^2 to 47 km^2, mainly in the southern portion of the hills.

It was also during this period that water resources in the area began to be harnessed to generate electricity. A series of dams and reservoirs was built, which significantly altered the water regimes. This was to have important consequences for the ecology of the lower hills. On the Nilgiri hills themselves, most of this activity was confined to the western portion. The reservoir and dam-construction activity itself had major ecological consequences. These areas had been relatively undisturbed and were the only remnants of the original vegetation within the Nilgiri hills. They were penetrated with a network of roads, and the influx of a large labour force led to the destruction of sholas around the reservoirs. The Pykara Reservoir, built in 1932, has a waterspread of 4 km^2 and a catchment area of 185 km^2. This scheme linked up the northern streams of the Moyar catchment; these had consequences for the Sigur plateau which will be discussed later.

The modern period is marked by a massive growth in communication networks; the growth of non-agricultural labour settlements; the large-scale conversion of reserve forest areas into forest plantations; a massive manipulation of the water regime by dams and reservoirs; the conversion of agricultural and degraded lands into tea plantations; and the degradation of the Nilgiri slopes into scrub vegetation.[20]

The Kundah range, the last hinterland area without communication networks, was suddenly opened up by roads for the development of hydro-electric schemes. Over 90 per cent of the catchment of the Bhavani was bound with a network of reservoirs to generate power.[21]. With it came settlements to provide labour and other services for their construction and maintenance.[22] The series of dams built did not essentially change the land use patterns on the hills, but they made many of the streams flowing southward and eastward seasonal, which had consequences for land use on the lower hills.

With the impetus given by the National Forest Policy of 1952, large areas under the control of the Forest Department were converted to plantations to provide raw material to industry. Attempts were made to cover over 90 per cent of the grasslands into wattle and eucalyptus plantations. These failed on the western fringes of the plateau because of frost and the fury of the monsoon. In other areas, plantations became an industry and supported a large immigrant labour force that encroached on government lands. Agriculture witnessed a marginal expansion with attempts to settle Toda graziers. Because of the loss of tree cover in the southern portions, soil fertility and the micro-climate had changed. Consequently, many coffee plantations were replaced by the hardier tea plantations. Other areas degraded into scrubland.



Map 2. Landscape Changes on the Nilgiri Plateau.

Table 1. World Production of Shrimp
(Thousands of Metric Tones)

YEAR	FARM RAISED	WILD - CAUGHT	TOTAL
1982	84	1,652	1,736
1983	143	1,683	1,826
1984	174	1,733	1,907
1985	213	1,906	2,119
1986	309	1,909	2,218
1987	551	1,733	2,284
1988	604	1,914	2,518
1989	614	1,832	2,446
1990	633	1,968	2,601
1991	690	2,118	2,808
1992	721	2,191	2,912
1993	610	2,100	2,710

It is obvious from the figures quoted above that farm - raised production of shrimp is of very small quantity as compared to wild - caught. Even if some of the shrimp culture farms which are polluting the environment are closed, the production of shrimp by environmentally friendly techniques would not be affected and there may not be any loss to the economy specially in view of the finding given by NEERI that the damage caused to ecology and economics by the aquaculture farming is higher than the earnings from the sale of coastal aquaculture produce. That may be the reason for the European and American countries for not permitting their sea - coasts to be exploited for shrimp - culture farming. The UN report shows that 809 of the farm - cultured - shrimp comes from the developing countries of Asia.

We therefore, order and direct as under:

1. The Central Government shall constitute an authority under section 3(3) of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 and shall confer on the said authority all the powers necessary to protect the ecologically fragile coastal areas, sea shore, water front and other coastal areas specifically to deal with the situation created by shrimp culture industry in the coastal state, union territories. The authority shall be headed by a retired judge of High Court. Other members with expertise in the field of aqua culture, pollution control and environment shall confer on the said authority the powers to issue directions under section of the Act and for taking measures with respect to the matters referred to in clauses (v), (vi), (vii), (viii), (ix), (x) and (xii) or subsection (2) of section 3. The Central Government shall constitute the authority before January 15, 1997.



2. The authority so constituted by the Central Government shall implement "the precautionary procedure" and "the Polluter Pays" principles.

3. The shrimp culture industries / shrimp ponds are covered by the prohibition contained in par. 2(1) of the CRZ Notification. No shrimp culture pond can be constructed or set up within the coastal regulation zone as defined in the CRZ notification. This shall be applicable to all seas, bays, estuaries, creeks, rivers and backwaters this direction shall not apply to traditional and improved traditional types of technologies as defined in Alagarsamy's report which are practised in the coastal low lying area.

4. All aqua culture industries/shrimp culture industries / shrimp culture ponds operating / set up in the coastal regulation zone as defined under the CRZ notification shall be demolished and removed from the said area before March 31st 1997. We direct the Superintendent of Police / Deputy Commissioner of Police and the District Magistrate / Collector of the area to enforce this direction and close / demolish all aquaculture industries / shrimp culture industries / shrimp culture ponds on or before March 31 1997. A compliance report in this respect shall be filed in this court by these authorities before April 15, 1997.

5. The farmers who are operating traditional and improved traditional systems of aquaculture may adopt improved technology for increased production productivity and return with prior approval of the 'authority' constituted by this order.

6. The agricultural lands, salt pan lands, mangroves, wet lands, forest lands, land for village common purpose and the land meant for public purposes shall not be used / converted for construction of shrimp culture ponds.

7. No aquaculture industries/shrimp culture industries/shrimp culture ponds shall be constructed / set up within 1000 meters of Chilika lake and Pulicat lake including bird Sanctuaries namely Yadurapattu and Nelapattu.

8. Aquaculture industry/ Shrimp culture ponds already operating and functioning in the said area of 1000 meters shall be closed and demolished before March 31, 1997. We direct the Superintendent of Police/ Deputy Commissioner of Police and the District Magistrate / Collector of the area to enforce this direction and close/demolish aquaculture industries/ shrimp culture industries, shrimp culture ponds on or before March 1997. Compliance report in this respect shall be filed in this court by these authorities before April 15, 1997.

9. Aquaculture industry / shrimp culture industry / shrimp ponds other than traditional and improved traditional may be set up / constructed outside the coastal regulation zone as defined by the CRZ notification and outside 1000 meter of Chilka and Pulicat lakes with the prior approval of the authority as constituted by this court. Such industries

which are already operating in the said areas shall obtain authorisation from the "Authority" before April 30, 1997 failing which the industry concerned shall stop functioning with effect from the said date. We further direct that any aquaculture activity including intensive and semi-intensive activity which has the effect of causing salinity of soil or the drinking water or wells and / or by the use or chemical feeds increases shrimp or prawn production with consequently increases in sedimentation which on putrefaction is a potential health hazard apart from causing siltation, turgidity of water courses and estuaries with detrimental implication on local flora and fauna shall not be allowed by the aforesaid authority.

10. Aquaculture industry/shrimp culture industry/ shrimp culture ponds which have been functioning/operating within the coastal regulation zone as defined by CRZ Notification and within 1000 meters from Chilka and Pulicat lakes shall be liable to compensate the affected persons on the basis of the polluter pays principle.

11. The authority shall with the help of expert opinion and after giving, opportunity to the concerned polluters assess the loss to the ecology & environment of the affected areas and shall be liable to compensate individuals / families who have suffered because of the pollution and shall assess the compensation to be paid to the said individuals / families. The authority shall further determine the compensation to be recovered from the polluters as cost of reversing the damaged environment. The authority shall lay down just and fair procedure for completing the exercise.

12. The authority shall compute the compensation under two heads namely for reversing the ecology and for payment to the individuals. A statement showing the total amount to be recovered, the names of the polluters for whom the amount is to be recovered, the amount to be recovered from each polluter, the persons to when the compensation is to be paid and the amount payable to each of them shall be forwarded to the Collector / District Magistrate of the area concerned, the Collector / District Magistrate shall recover the amount from the polluters, if necessary, as arrears of land revenue. He shall disburse the compensation awarded by the authority to the affected persons / families.

13. We further direct that any violation or non compliance of the directions of this court shall attract the provisions of the contempt of Courts Act in addition.

14. The compensation amount recovered from the polluters shall be deposited under a separate head called "Environment Protection Fund" and shall be utilised for compensating the affected persons as identified by the authority and also for restoring the damaged environment.

15. The authority in consultation with expert bodies like NEERI, Central Pollution Control Board, respective State Pollution control boards shall frame scheme / schemes



diverting the damage cause to ecology and environment by pollution in the world. States / Union Territories. The scheme / schemes shall be executed by the respective Governments / Union Territory Governments under the supervision of the Central Government. The expenditure shall be met from the "Environment Protection Fund" and from other sources, provided by the respective State Governments / Union Territory Governments and the Central Government.

16. The workmen employed in the shrimp culture industries which are to be closed in terms of this order shall be deemed to have been retrenched with effect from April 30, 1997 provided they have been in continuous service as defined in Section 25B of the industrial disputes act 1947 for not less than one year in the industry concerned before the said date. There shall be paid compensation in terms of section 25 F Industrial Disputes Act, 1947. These workmen shall be paid in addition six years wages as additional compensation. The compensation shall be paid to the workmen before May 31, 1997. The gratuity amount payable to the workmen shall be paid in addition.

The Writ petition is allowed with costs. We quantify the cost as Rs. 1,40,000 (Rupees One lakh and Forty Thousand to be paid by the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Orissa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal in actual shares of Rs. 2000/- each. The amount of Rs. 1,40,000/- realised from the seven coastal states shall be paid to Mr. MC. Mehta, Advocate who has appeared in this case throughout. We place on record our appreciation for the assistance rendered by Mr. Mehta.

Kuldip Singh S.Sagir Ahmad

New Delhi
December 11, 1996

Equations

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